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# A RUNAWAY MARRIAGE



BY WILLIAM MAITLAND

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# A RUNAWAY MARRIAGE.

BY

Mrs. WILLIAM MAUDE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHILD COUNTESS," ETC.



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# A RUNAWAY MARRIAGE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE DANCE AT THE SQUIRE'S.

"EIGHT from the Manor clock! Come, Kitty, my father cannot bear to wait. What think you, Kitty, am I right? This flower will not stay in straight! Nay, that will do. I must see to pin my rose—stand back and let me have the glass!" Then comes our father's cheery "Ready, girls?" and Kitty's answer, "Coming, coming, sir!" And then, while Sukey holds the candle high above our heads, we come tapping down the stairs, with our dainty satin heels and rustling hoops, to join our mother in the hall.

"The coach is at the door," says my father, turning to me, "and girls should learn betimes the great value of punctuality, whether shown to their elders or inferiors; but we will say nothing to night, for the extraordinary event of a dance at the Squire's is enough to turn all our heads!"

"Come, children, let me look at you," says my mother. I can see a pleased smile light up her face as she turns us towards the light, and bestows a kiss on each.

"There, Richard! don't you think we ought to be proud of two such wenches?"

I am very simply dressed in a gown of white lutestring over a rose-coloured petticoat tied back at the sides, a sash of white tiffany, and the front of the stay crossed with rose-ribbon to match the petticoat; and Kitty's costume is in every respect like mine. Our hair, which we curl ourselves (my mother will allow no *friseur* in the house), is dressed without powder, only a bunch of pink and white roses for ornament; and we wear long gloves above the elbow, and rose-coloured shoes.

"I always say the Rutland gown is the most becoming," says my mother, as we get into the coach, and she gives an approving nod towards Kitty's fine figure; whereupon my father laughs at the gravity of her tone, and then all our tongues begin to chatter.

I have never been to a dance before; Kitty has been twice last winter to a neighbour's house, and in consequence holds her head high and looks down upon my inexperience. Oh, what a splendid night it is. Shall I ever forget it?

After two hours' jolting and rumbling over the uneven roads we get into Squire Clavering's park, and here the darkness seems alive with the lights carried by serving-men and boys. Amidst flaring torches, and a great deal of shouting, we draw up at last before the door of the mansion, and my heart beats fast as John lets down the steps. My mother is handed out, Kitty follows, and then—like some strange, delightful dream,—I, Joan Verity, find myself in a scene of enchantment such as I have never imagined before! I don't know what my mind had pictured it, but I feel sure it surpasses my wildest dreams, and I stand like one giddy until wakened to my proper senses by an admonitory poke from Kitty and my mother's voice saying, "My daughter Joan, madam, younger than Kitty by a year and a half," and I am introduced to our hostess, Lady Amanda Clavering, and then swept on with the others into the gay vortex beyond.

I remember nothing of her ladyship afterwards, except that her head is decorated with the highest tower of powder and feathers that I have yet seen.

Kitty whispers in my ear: "Joan, don't forget your courtesy; and you look half-dazed; do mind your manners!"

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belle of the ball, Miss Joan. I vow and protest there is not a prettier girl in the room!" And I wonder do young gentlemen always talk like this? It is very pleasant, if not quite true. There is no time for an answer even if I had one ready, for we are flying down the long ranks after the rest, my hand in his and the wonderful fascinating eyes looking down into mine. How the fiddlers scrape! and the oak boards creak under the whirling couples. "Poussette! poussette!" rings in my ear from an authoritative old gentleman, who seems determined to set everybody right: hands across, down the middle and up again, and hands across once more.

Fairly breathless, we stop at last, and can watch at our leisure the dancers' mad career; a medley of ever changing rainbow tints, smiling faces under patches and powder and rouge, embroidery and brocade. The grim old portraits look down from their wreaths of holly on the wall, and seem to say: "Youth is frail and foolish, but it only comes once, and it carries with it the innocent enjoyment of life which never returns to us in weary after-years!" But I have no time for such prosaic meditation—I am so happy! only the thought that perhaps the last rose, pinned in my haste, may by an unlucky chance fall out, comes to my mind, and this doubt qualifies my enjoyment.

The dance is over, but there is more happiness to come. What a world of pleasure seems suddenly opened to my eyes. Why cannot we dance always? Why cannot every evening be like this beautiful Christmas night? Sir Harry brings me negus, and eats sweet cake at my side with those dainty white fingers, and looks at me with his wonderful eyes till I can only blush and lower my own. He speaks in such a gentleman-like manner, and is so kind and courteous that I give a heavy sigh when at last he leads me back to a seat near my mother, who is conversing with the parson's wife, while my mind keeps running on my partner, comparing him to the disadvantage of her own beardless son. The latter comes presently to ask me for a dance, which I am glad to accept, with every nerve tingling. I cannot bear to sit down. I am by way of making much of Mr. Beverley, for we are very good friends at the parsonage, and no religious differences ever come between us. But to-night my *distracte* air must make him take me for the stupidest of girls.

"This is your first appearance in the *beau monde*, Miss Joan," he begins, with that patronising air so intolerable to very young girls; "it is shy work, no doubt, and you have no tongue to-night."



"Indeed, sir," I rejoin, "I have plenty; but I would fain be silent and hear you discourse as becomes a gentleman in a lady's company."

He only laughs; and it is the more provoking when he says: "A fine fellow yonder could draw out plenty just now, as far as I can judge."

"Indeed, Mr. Tom, you are a rude fellow to make any such observation," I say, with more heat than the occasion requires. And for the rest of the evening we are at daggers drawn, as the saying is; only, at parting, Tom Beverley squeezes my fingers as they rest for a moment on his, and begs my pardon in low, gruff tones.

Little reck I of him or his advances. Sir Harry Chaucer has asked me, and in a seventh heaven of delight I suffer myself to be led out again. In the agreeable hurry of going down a lively dance, the rose so hastily pinned in my hair falls to the ground, and before I can well observe its loss, Sir Harry has picked it up, and I feign not to see when he places it in his bosom.

"Do not think I shall lightly part with it," he says, drawing me out of the dance; "it is a pledge of the pleasantest Christmas night I ever had the happiness to pass."

"Indeed, sir?" I look up at him not without a certain coquetry in my face and voice. "I should well have imagined you had passed many

a pleasanter with sparkling wits and beautiful town ladies."

"More witty, more beautiful, perhaps," he says, suddenly dropping his bantering tone to one of real sentiment, "but not more innocent." His voice, and the look that accompanied it, almost take away my breath.

"Sweet creature," he says, taking my hand with his ungloved fingers, "a white rose is a fitting emblem of such simplicity."

I know not what to answer, but my attention is immediately distracted by a call from my mother, who, good soul, has been watching us from her seat against the wall.

"Joan, here is an old friend of your father, very anxious to make your acquaintance. You do not yet know Mr. Rising. Let me present you—my daughter, Joan,—Joan, Mr. Geoffrey Rising, of Islington Manor." And as this dance is ended, I cannot refuse to go down the next dance with my father's old friend, though Sir Harry sighs, and looks unutterable things ere he relinquishes my hand.

My present partner is a stout man, in a snuff-coloured coat. He is a passable dancer, fat people being often light of foot when one would least expect it from their outward bulk. Too soon the hours pass, and time seems envious of

our joy! I am far too excited to eat much of the handsome supper provided, to which we all go hand in hand; and I am envious of the young madam in the rose brocade who falls to Sir Harry Chaucer's lot. My partner is still the fat man in snuff-colour, and he seems mighty fond of both my parents, and asks, as I think, many curious questions about my sister.

"She is reckoned handsome," I say, for I am proud of Kitty's fine figure. "Look where she sits, the other side of the table, between the lady in blue and the young fellow with saffron-coloured coat. She with the dark curls and black eyes—that's our Kitty!"

Supper over, the dancing begins again with greater zest than ever. I think the wine has circulated pretty freely; I myself have had more than one glass of negus, and off we go down a dance. All the room seems dancing! None can keep still with such merry strains afloat. I sigh, and wish I had my first partner; but Sir Harry does not come again.

My father is playfully entreating my mother; she shakes her head and says she is "too old," but he prevails at last, and off they go down a dance.

The musicians are playing wildly, and as if they would never tire. Squire Clavering measures

his length on the floor, and the parson himself cannot keep his legs amidst the mad dancers on the slippery oak boards, when my father hurries us away.

"What!" cries Kitty, "so soon?"

"Is it twelve o'clock?" I ask.

"You little simpleton," says my mother, "it was that when we sat down to supper, it is past three now!"

So we put on our cloaks. Mr. Rising comes to help my father get the coach, which is not accomplished without much brawling and many round oaths; and when at last they find it, the post-boy is drunk on the Squire's good cider, so my father must needs drive while coachman mounts the leader. This fellow is scarce sober, but we have a boy to run before with a torch, so with much danger and difficulty we make our way back to Grange Farm. Mr. Rising goes his own way, he rides into the town, but not without a promise given to my mother's hospitable entreaty that he will spend a time with us about Lady Day, for he returns just now to his Manor at Islington. At first our tongues wag, but presently I forget everything in a sound sleep, only awaking when John gives a thundering knock on the door, and I hear Sukey's voice: "Well sir, and madam, I hope you have all been

well entertained. It is near six o'clock!" and my mother says, "Put them both abed, Sukey, and let them have their fill of sleep. Miss Joan is quite sound already."

I am wide awake again as we go upstairs, and willing to tell Kitty all my experiences and hear her relate her own; but she, more prudent, hurries me to bed, and Sukey will not let me dally.

"Say a prayer that all your pleasuring may have worked no harm," she says, dubiously shaking her head, "and so commending yourself to God's good mercy, get straight away to bed."

Her words give me some doubt as to the expediency of pleasuring, but I have no time to think of scruples on this score, for scarcely have I laid my head on the pillow than I fall asleep.

---

## CHAPTER II.

## LOVE AT SIXTEEN.

THE sun comes glancing into the parlour where my mother sits at the casement window. The wood fire blazes cheerily up the wide chimney. Kitty has her knitting, and I make believe to read. The dance is a thing of the past, we have each told our own story, our part in the merry night's doing, and mother has listened, well-pleased at all the polite attention Kitty and I have to relate, and the compliments bestowed on our persons, our dress, and our manners. Mr. Rising's attention to Kitty causes my sister to blush and hang down her head. It appears he danced more than once with her, and such notice seems mightily to have pleased my father. In rallying Kitty upon her old admirer, they do not pay any heed to my changing countenance when asked after my partner ; only mother puts a gentle hand upon my shoulder as I turn away.

"Joan says she liked them all well enough," says my father. "Well, the right man will come some day. Keep your heart free, child ; keep it free !" He laughs as he pats my cheek.

"Joan liked the young gentleman in the peach-coloured suit," says Kitty, while I redden furiously; "she can talk of nobody else."

"He danced right well," says my mother, smiling at my confusion. "I never saw a prettier couple than when he went down the dance with my Joan!"

"But young Mr. Clavering asked me," says Kitty with an air of superiority, "and said all manner of fine things. I believe we girls looked as well as any of your powdered madams, though we are only country misses."

"My Kitty would do well to remember that pride ever goeth before a fall," says my mother reprovingly, and upon that we fall to silence.

I try to read my book, but ever and again the music floats in my ears, and I seem to hear the low, sweet voice, and see the eyes I never can forget. Can one evening's entertainment so change all existence?

As the shadows of the short afternoon fall, we take our beads and say them in the dim fire-light. I find great difficulty in keeping my attention, for my thoughts keep roving back to scenes of past pleasure, and Sukey's words occur to me. So when we have done, and I sitting at my mother's knee, a privilege accorded to me as the youngest, I ask, "Can it be wrong to go

a-pleasuring, or to scenes of entertainments?" and I tell her what Sukey said. "Not wrong, surely," says my mother, "for innocent enjoyment is the best preventative against sin, which is often given occasion of by too much melancholy. Nevertheless," she continues, "it behoves us to be careful when in company with others that we observe always a modest demeanour, with discretion."

I heave a little sigh as then I say, "I am too happy thinking of past delights to give myself to prayer."

"See, my child," she says, "the more enjoyment we have, the more we must thank our God Who bestows it, and in the midst of all our joy, remember His Passion; and so thinking will draw us out of ourselves, for He wills to see us innocent and happy, but we must not forget Him."

I say my beads that night by my little bed, the Five Sorrowful Mysteries, and as I meditate on the God-Man suffering the Agony in the Garden, and the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, and carrying His Cross, and finally His Crucifixion, I feel all my heart melt as I thank Him for His pains, and I think after all that pleasure is not everything, but the doing His will Who did so much for us!



There is a poor family in the village to whom my parents are very kind, and Kitty and I carry down a hot dinner to them twice a week. On the next Sunday we take them some beef in a pie-dish, covered over carefully with a white cloth. It is not far, only just behind the plantation, at the end of our garden. We are just turning down the lane near the well, when we hear horses' feet.

"La, Joan," cried my sister, "what if we should be discovered in this guise carrying a pie-dish! Perhaps they be smart Sunday dressed folk riding to Northminster."

Just as she speaks, two horsemen come in sight, and I nearly drop my share of the burden when I recognise Sir Harry Chaucer. I almost hope he will not notice us, but they draw rein, and Sir Harry takes off his gold-laced hat, bowing down almost to his saddle-bow.

"Who is your fair acquaintance, sir?" says the other horseman, half jocosely; "come, now, enlighten me!"

We make our courtesies as best we can with the heavy pie-dish between us.

"Miss Verity and Miss Joan Verity," says Sir Harry, with grave courtesy, "allow me to present to you Mr. Giles Yorke."

"Your servant, ladies," says Mr. Yorke,

flourishing his three-cornered hat, and laying his hand on his heart.

"A visitor like my unworthy self at Clavering Manor. You are doubtless on some errand of mercy?" continues Sir Harry, "the morning spent in yon sacred edifice, you are going now to supplement your piety by good deeds?"

My sister is about to answer, when I say bluntly: "No; we say our prayers at home; we do not go to that church. We are Catholics."

An uncalled-for confession; I do not know what prompted me to make it, only that I cannot bear disguises, and must out with everything, at whatever cost. Sir Harry colours, as though shocked at the disclosure; his companion lifts his eyebrows with a cynical smile.

"Papists, egad!" he says, eyeing us with that mocking air which turns the corners of his mouth and wrinkles his smooth forehead unpleasantly. "What a good joke! Do Papists air their dinners with their prayers?"

This is too much for Kitty; she sets the pie-dish on the ground, and looks up confronting her adversary. "And you, sir, what prayers do you say? Not so long ago, you were all 'Papists,' as you call us! Do you think your Protestant religion has improved your manners, or taught you to give up drinking and swearing?"

I am astonished to hear my sister break out like this, while her black eyes flash, and she stands up against the hedge. A robin whistles plaintively in the silence that follows, and the two young gentlemen fix their astonished eyes upon her as though she was a thing dropped down from the clouds. The dead brown twigs make a background to her cherry gown, and her flaming cheeks and red-parted lips match with the cherry colour.

"An uncommon pretty Papist," says Mr. Yorke, with the oath that, alas! interlards too often the speeches of these fine gentlemen. "Speaks well, though she be one of them, which I can scarce credit."

"Hold!" cries Sir Harry; "I'd have you remember that these ladies are my friends. I am proud of the honour, and I will have no one offer them insult."

While he speaks, he jumps lightly from his horse, and throws the rein to his companion; then, to my intense astonishment, possesses himself of our pie-dish, and marches solemnly forward.

"Lead on, ladies, I will carry your burden so far as the cottage; it is the least I can do after detaining you," he says, bowing towards us as well as he can with his strange burden, while Mr. Giles Yorke laughs long and loudly.

Two young countrymen, in Sunday smocks, stand still to stare and cry, "A wager, for a wager!" clapping their hands, while Kitty walks erect with scarlet cheeks, and I am ready to sink into the ground. Folk may well stare! Who ever saw a man of fashion carrying a pie-dish? There is a little gathering of boys and girls by the time we reach the humble cotter's, and we implore the young gentleman to leave us.

"Now that my mission is accomplished," he says, "I will not further trouble you with my unwelcome presence, but I crave to know, with your permission, whether I may some day wait on you at your house?"

"That must be as our parents wish, sir," says Kitty demurely. "Come in, Joan; Master Goodman's dinner will be cold if we delay any longer!" And pushing me inside she makes her courtesy, and shuts the door in his face. I feel annoyed at such cold behaviour to my kind friend of Christmas night, but a certain coyness and timidity prevent any further speech on my part. As for Sir Harry, we only hear his retreating footsteps as we turn to wish good-morrow to old Master Goodman and his wife. The fresh, keen breeze comes whistling in at the little casement under the thatch, but the cotter's children are as round and rosy as any you may wish to see.

"Good-morrow, young misses, and pray how is master, and how is madam?"

My mind is roving, and I leave Kitty to do the talking. I picture to myself all the while a dashing chestnut horse, on which Sir Harry Chaucer is mounted, galloping now, perhaps, towards Northminster. My thoughts do not get further than this. He is nothing to me, only a picture-book hero whom, perhaps, I may never see again. Perhaps? What did he say about waiting on us at our house? I wish he may come, and then again I would rather he did not; I feel suddenly shy at the thought of meeting him. He spoke to my sister to-day, but his looks were all for me.

We walked back together down the lane and through the plantation.

"I never saw a prettier fellow!" cries Kitty in admiration, "and so gallant! Why, Joan, you're as red as a peony!" "I confess I did not admire his carrying of Master Goodman's dinner," say I deceitfully, in the endeavour to cover my confusion; "it brought us to shame in the eyes of the bystanders."

"That friend of his will mock him finely for the doing of it," says Kitty; "but didn't I give it well to the smart gentleman in the matter of religion? My blood was up, and if I'd been a

man, I would have laid about me with my fists, and cudgelled him well for his insolence!"

Then, as the air is very keen and biting, we leave further talk and run hand in hand the rest of the way, stamping our feet to keep ourselves warm. My foolish little heart gives a flutter, thinking that perhaps after all Sir Harry did not ride on, but that we shall find him sitting with our mother in the parlour.

"Young Mr. Beverley is here," says John; and Kitty goes into the parlour. But I run upstairs to our bedroom to dream.

That bedroom! I can see it now! A smell of lavender pervading all, two little white dimity beds, and a crucifix over each—a pious remembrance of Him Who died to save. I have a little picture brought over the sea from foreign parts, it represents our Blessed Lady holding her Divine Son in her arms. O Blessed Mother! to have so great a privilege! Pray for us that one day we may enjoy Him too! I went to Communion not long ago, and this thought fills me with inexpressible joy. I, too, have held that Holy Child, not in my arms, but in my heart, closely united to Him; and, from the bottom of my soul I commiserate those poor creatures outside the Church, who are cut off from such great happiness and consolation.

And Sir Harry Chaucer? He has a good-natured face and the eyes of sensibility. Is he as ignorant as the rest, and will he despise us for our religion?

My thoughts go no further than this. Mother calls to me:

"Mr. Beverley is leaving."

I run down then.

"Why, Joan, what a sober face!" says my father. "Here's Tom Beverley willing to walk with you two girls as far as the cross-roads; don't go further, my dears."

"And supper will be ready against you return," says my mother.

"Stay to supper, Tom," says my father. "There's cold turkey, and Christmas still to be kept up with a bowl of hot punch."

But Tom cannot stay. I am soon ready; and while Kitty still delays, we go outside, along the empty garden borders, and down the yew-tree walk.

"Why, I haven't forgotten my rude speeches," says Mr. Tom incoherently. "I mean, that's why I'm come." He stops and looks shy. "I hope you've forgiven me, Miss Joan?"

"Forgive and forget," I say gaily. "I tell you truly, Tom, I have never given you or your speeches so much as one little thought since."

I see he looks mortified.

"Joan, I wish you would give me a little thought sometimes. I protest *you* are never out of my mind."

"Then I fear you run a great chance of turning imbecile," say I maliciously, "if such indeed be the case. But now here comes Kitty; will you race me to the gate?"

Away we go down the long gravel walk like young ponies just loosed from the paddock. Our curls blow out behind, and my large hat, a new one, flies off and lodges in a holly bush.

"O my! The new hat mother bought at Northminster!" cries Kitty, while I fall laughing. It is of pea-green sarsnet, turned up with roses, and Mr. Beverley, while he picks it up, pronounces it very elegant.

"You should not have worn it just for a run," says Kitty severely, "the chip hat like mine would have done as well."

How can I tell Kitty that the thought of perhaps meeting a rider on the road to Clavering Manor made me select my prettiest hat?

I make no answer, and we continue our walk till the cross-roads come in sight. "If such flowers were in season I would pluck a forget-me-not," says Tom Beverley, detaining me when Kitty has turned back towards the house.



"You're too forward by half," I return, dragging myself away from him. "I like violets best; you know they mean modesty!" and I run away.

Being fleet of foot, I soon out-distance him, and reach Kitty's side.

---

## CHAPTER III.

## THE FIRST LOVE TRYST.

DO most people live on day-dreams? I know I do on mine. All the wintry days I sit dreaming of that one bright evening; of my dance at the Squire's, when someone in a peach-coloured coat held my hand, and someone's dark eyes looked down into mine, with a true blue knot in the background. Is not that a good omen that he will be faithful? Somehow, I have taken young Sir Harry Chaucer for my lover, with the groundless affection fostered by an hour's admiration. But that is love at sixteen!

I wonder he does not come to see me, but I do not think he can have forgotten me. He does not know where I live. So I dream on until the budding spring comes bursting down hill and down dale, bringing love, in her every breath, with Saint Valentine's Day, the quick-hedge all green, and the birds all a-courting. Letters have come from Islington, and by this time I know that Mr. Geoffry Rising is our Kitty's destined husband. My father takes her into the oak-parlour one day, just as March is beginning,

and she comes out a rosy red, for Mr. Rising is expected here by Lady Day.

It is on the morning of his arrival that I go out, basket in hand, to the six-acre meadow to gather flowers for the decoration of Mr. Rising's chamber, and the bowls about the house, which my mother will have fresh filled to celebrate his arrival.

Kitty is in the kitchen, helping Sukey with her cakes, and I am glad for more reasons than one to be alone. I like to think out my thoughts to the birds and blue sky, and feel the soft spring sunshine all about me, as I pick the little tender blossoms on the bright green grass. Daisies and dandelions make a carpet for my feet till I enter the copse at the end of the meadow to look for primroses amongst the tree-roots, and blue and white violets under the grass. Then I sit down and dream in the still, beautiful wood, listening to the whistling of the happy birds, and dreaming, fall asleep. I don't know how it happens, but I feel a kiss on my cheek, and I wake to find *him* beside me!

"O sir!"

I am covered with confusion, and, jumping up, my basket rolls away, and all my woodland spoils are scattered.

"Have I affrighted you, sweet little one?"

Sir Harry Chaucer is on his knees gathering together my lost treasures. Then I kneel too to pick them up, and find courage to look into his face. How my poor little heart beats!

"I thought you had forgot me," I say simply.

The basket is filled again now, and suddenly he takes both my hands in his, and looks into my face.

"Dear heart, do you love me, then?"

I think my eyes are tell-tale, for I make no answer, and he seems satisfied. The birds go on singing, singing, the breeze comes rustling the tree-tops, and my fresh-gathered primroses are blown away. He sits close to me, and our talk is all of love amongst the sweet March violets and the green budding leaves.

"Joan, will you love me always?" he asks very earnestly, and his eyes read my drooping face.

"Yes," I answer, "I can never change, though some people do."

"Some people are faithless, but you will be true," he says solemnly. "Joan, were you sorry when you thought you would never see me again?"

"Yes."

"Little love, kiss me."

In all simplicity I lift my face, and then I

say quite shyly that I am picking flowers for Mr. Rising's chamber, and that he is going to wed my sister Kitty, and that, perhaps, I had better go. For all answer he opens his embroidered waistcoat, and takes out a crushed rosebud, which he presses to his lips; and then I see he has indeed remembered poor little Joan Verity all these long months!

"I must go, sweet charmer," he says, rising reluctantly to his feet, as the sound of the Manor clock comes faintly across the sunny fields: "it is two o'clock, and I must be with Clavering for dinner."

"But shall you not come—not come and see Grange Farm, and Kitty, and my parents?"

"Another day, another day I will wait on you, my sweet, at your own house; but time presses, and I must not dally further, though I fain would trifle away every hour at my angel's feet."

"Nay, sir, but you said before that you would come; must I wait in vain again?"

I fancy his cheek flushes and then grows pale.

"Nay, heaven forbid," he answers hastily, "that you should wait in vain. You are too comely, too sweet by half, to lack a hundred lovers!"

With this answer I must even rest content; and then, like a fairy prince, he has gone away through the wood, standing to wave his hand at the last point where I can catch a glimpse of his gold-lace coat amongst the branches. A forlorn little maid, I go away with my flowers, and arrive so late at home that universal surprise awaits my appearance.

"Why, child!" says my mother, "where have you been? And not so many primroses after all; but you look flushed and tired too. There, there, my girl, don't cry," she adds more gently, as in my excitement the ready tears begin to flow. "Retire to your chamber, and with all haste make yourself ready for dinner. There will be time then to dispose the flowers, for Mr. Rising will not be here much before supper."

Thus admonished, with a bursting heart I betake myself upstairs. Girls are sharp-witted creatures, and not slow to discover anything extraordinary, in those of their own sex especially; so Kitty no sooner casts her eyes upon me than she exclaims:

"I vow, Joan, something has happened! Why, you are half laughing, half crying, Joan—what is it? Has he come?"

"Who?"

"Mr. Geoffrey Rising," and a vivid blush overspreads my sister's face.

"Nay, Kitty, nay, but I've seen *him!*" This lucid explanation appears to enlighten my sister, for she cries out :

"What! the young gentleman in the peach-coloured coat?"

"The same."

"And he? What said he?"

I hang down my head.

"Kitty, he says he loves me dearly."

There is a prolonged silence, and then my sister gives vent to her surprise at my disclosure.

"La, Joan! I vow and protest it's the veriest most astounding piece of news I ever heard! A fine gentleman, a man of fashion too!"

I am a little piqued at her unbounded astonishment, and I answer sharply: "And why not, why shouldn't he?"

At dinner time my mother notices something unusual, and, after dessert is over, she bids me go put on my hat, and while we pace together down the yew-tree walk, she learns my happy secret. But it is no delight to her. I can see that, even while my own heart is beating with those new sensations of pleasure.

"Joan," she says seriously, and stopping in her walk, "did the young gentleman intend to ask your hand in marriage, he would wait on us and ask our consent. What said he?"

"He only said he loved me." And then, as my mother preserves a severe silence, I ask :

"Is not that enough, madam?"

"I must judge of his intentions, my dear, when he comes to wait on your parents, as you say he will. But pardon me, child, if I grieve you when I say that this is no real offer of marriage, but a fine gentleman's passing fancy. What does he know of you, Joan—your sense or your parts? He has only seen you once, child, and gone down a dance or two with your hand for a partner. Such acquaintance is not enough for wedded life."

"He has seen me three times now," I say humbly, and counting on my fingers. My mother smiles.

"That is not often, Joan."

"But, mother, folk talk of love at first sight."

"My dear, be ruled by me. You are young in years, and younger in mind. Be not deceived by every coxcomb who comes dangling after you. If his intentions be honourable, he would ere this have waited on the object of his choice at her father's house." And my mother quotes these lines :

"Be not you, dear girl, deluded,  
By the gildings of the great ;  
Virtue from the mind excluded,  
They will ne'er content create."



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE DUEL.

"I'm going to Oxford, Miss Joan, and I've come to bid you farewell."

I am sitting in the arbour, where the woodbine climbs, and fills the air with fragrance.

Tom Beverley sees a little pale face in its round white cap, with dark lines under the brown eyes, for I am very sad and dejected. I put up one of my mittened hands, and make-believe to be reading, that he may not see the tears that are hanging there, when one drops down upon the book.

"What is it?" he says, taking up the volume more from a desire to cover my emotion than from any real interest—"The Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, appropriated solely to their use and amusement.' A very elegant composition," says Mr. Tom, putting it down upon the bench.

And then, as I do not immediately speak, he prays me not to weep.

"You are thinking," says he, "of that other fellow, who isn't worth a silver penny! O my

dear Joan, I could not help but see that those sweet eyes were weeping; and he is a wretch to cause those tears to flow."

"Sir!" I interrupt, rising in my indignation, "what call have you to mention him to me?"

But before I can prevent it, he has plumped down upon his knees, and is begging me to marry him.

"Miss Joan!" he cries, "I declare to you that I have never seen a woman I loved so well as you, and if you will but consent to be my wife, you will make your humble servant, Tom Beverley, the very happiest fellow in existence."

"You have not yet seen other women," I answer scornfully, "or you would have loved them as well. Nay, nay, Tom, you are full young; go to college, and mend your manners first."

More from fun than real spite I give forth this my opinion; but I see his honest face all in a glow as he starts to his feet.

"You repudiate an honest man," he says, "but though you know not the harm you do yourself, I know! and I will demand satisfaction of that fellow who keeps your heart captive, like a dog in the manger; but he shall rue the day!"

So my would-be husband takes himself off in

a fury, while I give vent to my feelings in peals of laughter, a hilarity I am far from really experiencing; and when Tom is gone out of sight, I cast myself down in the arbour, weeping bitterly. My sobs so far drown all outward sound from penetrating to my senses that I do not hear the gentle crunching of the gravel when a hand is laid on mine, and I start to see Tom Beverley bending over me.

"I knew you were in pain," he says with a tenderness that I scarce thought him capable of. "Joan dear, don't think me bold, I wouldn't be forward to you to save my life, only don't send me away from you without a kind word, it will break my heart." And the honest fellow begins to sob. "We have spent our childhood together, I cannot bear that after so many happy days we should be enemies now! I would help you if I could. Only tell me that you love me one small bit."

"Tom, dear Tom," I say gently, disengaging my hand, "I do love you—as a friend." But such acknowledgment will in no wise satisfy him, and he prolongs his entreaties to such an extent that I deem it wise to bring forth a cogent argument in order to deter him from such addresses for the future.

"How say you? What will Parson Beverley

think, if his only son makes suit for the hand of a Papist?"

The warm colour rushes up over face and neck as he makes answer: "I know we are not of the same religion, but a constant intercourse from youth to manhood has shown me that persons of that persuasion are not what they are said to be, but very good Christians and loyal king's subjects withal."

"But what will Mr. Beverley's parents say on this point?" I urge, looking as severe as I can, drawing myself up on the wooden bench, while he leans against the arbour trellis-work, a fine young fellow enough in his summer suit of pearl-gray and silver binding.

"I could easily persuade them, because they are all fond of you, Miss Joan." Then suddenly changing his tone, he says fiercely: "What of that young gentleman, as good a Protestant as myself—how may he wed a Catholic, and bring her into public circles with the approbation of his family and friends?"

I am looking away across the six-acre meadow to the wood where he told me of his love, and I see only the wonderful eyes as they look down into mine, and feel his warm breath on my cheek, as he vows to be faithful for ever.

"What will Madam say, and Mr. Verity, on

this point?" Tom repeats, cruelly mimicking my speech. "How may their daughter wed with one of the new Protestant religion?"

At his words, my sweet vision fades away, and the tears well up into my eyes. "You are cruel, Tom, and you bring forward an argument that will tell against yourself as well. I believe you would rather—rather," here I began to sob, "ruin all my happiness than see me happy with another, if that other be not yourself. I had not known you could be so selfish."

He almost frightens me when I look up and see the wrath in his every feature, his grey eyes look cutting as steel.

"Yea, I would rather *die* than let such a one have you, if you were to remain single all your life."

Then I jump up and rush past him into the house, and so take my leave (as I then think) for many months of Mr. Tom Beverley.

"Do you think he is unfaithful?"

"No, Kitty, I tell you he is biding his time to wait on my parents and ask their consent."

"But, Joan, a month and more has passed. It was at the time of Mr. Rising's visit that you met him in the wood, and now May has begun, and your fine lover comes not."

"I know he has been let by business or family affairs."

So I argue with my sister, but all the while my cheek grows paler every day, as I fear he has forgot, and that my mother's words are true, and he will never come again. And besides, a haunting fear gains possession of me. What if my parents refuse their consent to my marriage with one outside the Church? But then I have great hopes that he, with the kind, beautiful eyes, may be easily won over to the true Faith, if not before marriage, at least afterwards. Why not? God's Truth is not divided. Wrong doctrines cannot be of God, but rather of His enemy the devil; how then can such a noble heart long remain the devil's servant? It would rather incline to good, and if the good be once pointed out, such a one, I think, will be easily led to give up that heresy, and turn to the one true Faith. Then all will go right, and none make impediment to our union. Ah, poor little heart, so easily won in the spring, is it to be cast aside like a broken toy before summer has well begun?

My mother hears my reasonings, but will rather have me strive to forget such a one. "He has not meant it earnestly," she says, "so do not break thy heart for a gallant who loves and lightly rides away." But though she chide me,

I cannot forget, and I go out to the fields to whisper my grief to the summer flowers. Then in the evening, all amongst the soft moon shadows, I sit in the arbour to think of him.

One night, shall I ever forget it? I stroll out, as my custom is, and no one forbids me. Kitty is writing a letter to her lover, and as composition, when elegantly inscribed by a female hand, takes some little time, she retires into the oak parlour when supper is over, and my mother accompanies her to help her to indite. My father is reading, and so I wander forth alone. The moonbeams quiver down amongst the trees, and nature looks so beautiful on this still, cloudless night, that I go further than is my wont, and enter the plantation down a little winding path. How sister is to be envied. She has her lover at the house, duly accepted and acknowledged by the authorities, and the day already fixed for the wedding, but then, what is sober middle-aged Mr. Geoffrey compared with my handsome young gentleman? But then again, Mr. Geoffrey Rising is a good, pious man, and Sir Harry—alas! what do I know? I go down the path and peer over the gate into the lane.

Is that Tom Beverley just gone by, with his head muffled up, and looking so dejected? No, for he is at Oxford, and, thinking it idle fancy,

I turn away, when my attention is arrested by the sound of voices close at hand, almost in the plantation. I stand hesitating, and then, seemingly gigantic in the dim light, I see two men advance across the road. At that hour, in that lonely place, what will become of me? Seized with fear, I plunge into the wood and lie down behind a friendly maythorn bush, that stands like a ghostly sentry in the dark long shadows. I hear them come and open the gate, and then, all in a moment, while I tremble and shiver, I hear Sir Harry Chaucer's voice :

"This is the very place, or just beyond, and they call it the Grange Farm, though it is no farm now. She lives here."

I remember the tones of the sarcastic voice that speaks in answer :

"I verily believe you're as love-sick as a boy. Well, have it out; make a trysting-place, but don't tie the matrimonial knot just yet; you're only twenty-two; wait till you've a grey hair or two to show, before you settle down to country farming and syllabub parties. Besides, there's Lady Bab."

"I tell you, Giles," and my heart beats a joyous echo behind the maythorn tree, "I tell you she and no other shall be my wife. Her pure heart and innocent face are worth all your Lady Babs."



I know I ought to speak; listening is dishonourable; but I can neither move nor fly, but crouch like one paralysed in my hiding-place. And I hear the other's answer given in a bantering tone:

"And you've kept away all these weeks to secure the old lady's patrimony, and now she's not going to die after all, but live to cut you off with a shilling for marrying against her wishes."

"She has set her heart on Lady Bab, and when I heard my aunt was so dangerously ill, I thought to leave matters alone until her death, and so secure the will. But I can't wait longer, Yorke, nor will I act a dishonourable part."

They are turning away, when I, unable longer to restrain my sobs, discover myself to them by a little cry.

"A woman's voice! A petticoat in the woods by all that's wonderful!" cries Mr. Giles Yorke.

But my lover has made his way into the thicket and caught me in his arms. There I nestle like a little frightened bird, feeling sure all will be right now we meet again. While we so stand, he with his arm around me and my head against his shoulder, there is a great crackling and rending of branches, and some one comes crushing through the wood, as if in tremendous haste, and then, what is my surprise to see Tom Beverley standing in the path!

"So I have found you out," he cries, turning to Sir Harry Chaucer. "Liar, sneak, scoundrel! Sir, I demand satisfaction; I demand an account of your dastardly conduct."

"What now! Here's a bantam cock!" says Mr. Giles Yorke.

Sir Harry Chaucer turns to him with wonderful quiet in tone and manner.

"What satisfaction?" he asks coolly, "and who are you, sir? Give your name."

"Satisfaction to an honest man. I will not see this sweet young lady brought to grief by you. She is breaking her heart for you,—for you, sir! And you dare treat her so! I demand satisfaction at the point of the sword."

It is now my turn to cry out. "Tom! Tom Beverley, forbear! Are you mad? This gentleman intends no harm. O, sir, for pity's sake," and I turn to Sir Harry Chaucer, clinging to his arm, "do not heed him; do not accept a challenge from a boy!"

Mr. Giles Yorke interrupts me.

"I will be second, if the gentlemen will name their place and hour."

"Surely, surely, sir," I cry, "you will not fight a boy—for God's sake, Mr. Giles Yorke, interfere between them." But even while I cry out, Tom Beverley has struck Sir Harry Chaucer on the

cheek. He seems overcome with passion, and a certain sick dizziness takes hold upon me, and when I open my eyes again, he is gone.

"Do not leave me," I say faintly; "what has he done? where has he gone?"

"Hush, sweet, it is all right. I will not harm the boy if he be friend of yours." And at the sound of his voice speaking so tenderly, all my fears seem vanished. I smile up into his face.

"You will not go away and never come again?" I ask anxiously.

Mr. Giles Yorke has gone to the end of the path, and is whistling softly over the gate.

"Listen, sweetheart, you must never doubt my love is true, though my conduct appears strange; for reasons as yet not to be explained I cannot come to the Grange Farm. But my little girl will trust me? I shall be at Clavering Court for a few days longer, but I would not have it known."

"O, but, Sir Harry Chaucer, I can keep no secret from Mother."

He is silent.

"What can I say when they ask me?" I repeat, while I look up in his face with tearful eyes.

"Say? Say that Sir Harry Chaucer has promised one day to make Joan Verity his wife.

Is not that enough, my own?" and his eyes look softly into mine, with a wonderful love that speaks more than words. Then we part in the soft white moonlight that puts everything to sleep in a silvery mantle, and I creep home to bed, shivering a little with the chill night air, but my heart all a-fire with my new-found bliss.

"Heart alive!" cries Sukey, "I was just a-going to shut out young miss," as she sees me flit past her like a ghost out of the moonlight.

"Is it so late?" says Kitty, looking up from her writing and rubbing her eyes. But my father will have no conversation just then; it must be night prayers, and so to bed without more words.

"Madam, I have seen him again," I say simply the next morning, when Kitty has left the parlour, and I am studying my notes on the harpsichord. My mother is spinning in the window, where white and purple blossoms from the lilac trees make a rustling on the diamond panes, and the sky and earth seem met together in one dim line of azure blue.

"What, child!" my mother stops her wheel and comes over to my side.

"It is true," I say softly, while I clasp my hands over my bosom as if to still my heart's wild beating, "and he told me to say that Sir

Harry Chaucer will one day make Joan Verity his wife."

I repeat it carefully like a lesson learnt by rote. I am surprised when my mother takes me in her arms and begins to cry, while she rocks me to and fro as she used to do in my infant days.

"Joan, Joan," she sobs, "I thought you had forgot him! O, child, put the thought out of your head if you would not bring shame and misery on us all!"

I do not understand her, and while she weeps, I stand like one aghast.

"Tell me, my daughter," she says at last, while she wipes away her tears, "how was it? How had you speech of him?"

I stand up before her, then, respectfully, as it becomes a daughter to her parent, and tell her all that passed. When it comes to Tom Beverley, she smiles.

"It will not end in a duel," she says, calming my fears. "When daylight comes, Master Tom will have more sense than to cross swords with an experienced fencer, as all men of fashion are said to be!"

Then she goes to my father's closet, and it seems a long while till she comes back. I look out and down into the garden beds, through the

clustering monthly roses, to the blue periwinkle border, and count the flowers like tiny stars between the green, not knowing what I do, thinking only of him. Then the sweet lily bed under the south wall catches my eye, and I think of one pure maiden chosen to be Christ's Mother, of whom the lily is a fitting emblem. I kneel down with my arms on the sill, and pray our Lord Jesus, for His Mother's love, to help a poor girl in doubt and difficulty, and so dispose my father's heart towards me that he may give consent to my marriage with Sir Harry Chaucer. Then when I have waited long, my mother beckons me away, and I go trembling to get speech of my father.

"Hey-day, miss! what's this I hear?" he begins as I make my courtesy, and he motions me to a chair, "moonlight meetings, and trysting places?"

"I know of none such, sir, nor ever will, God helping me." I look up into his face as I answer, and to my surprise I see him smile, for I had greatly feared his anger, and the severe tone of his voice as he accosted me. Then he spoke to me more gently, although still chiding what he called my forwardness with this young gentleman, and setting my cap at one I know so little of. In conclusion, he bade me take notice that

no honourable man would act so on the sly, as this one, but a gentleman indeed would have come forward ere this and have openly demanded my hand in marriage. I look down much troubled while he speaks. "Indeed, he has promised to marry me," I say earnestly.

"Believe me, daughter, if his intentions were sincere, he would have waited on your parents before obtaining your consent. Things were not wont to be so conducted when I was a-courting, and if this be the new fashion, your fine gentleman shall be taught to keep his place. Hark ye, Joan!" I rise and stand with trembling knees. "I forbid you to hold intercourse with this Sir Harry Chaucer, under pain of my most severe displeasure."

"But sir——"

"No more words about it; Joan, you may retire."

What could I do but make my courtesy and withdraw? Then when I am alone, in the retirement of the honeysuckle harbour, I give full vent to my unhappy tears. "Alas! indeed, I am a child of misfortune!" I exclaim woefully, "since I may never see my love again."

My sighs and mingled prayers have somewhat abated, when I hear my dear mother call, and I rise to meet her with a slowly dragging step,

totally unlike my usual merry self. She takes me to her chair beneath the lime-trees, and looking in my downcast face, says cheerily :

“Don’t despair over a first love, Joan! it seems hard to say it, but I dare swear in a twelvemonth you will have forgotten this adventurer, who is not worthy of my good virtuous girl, and I pray God keep you from ill, and find you the right man for a husband when He judges fit. Have you given a thought, my daughter, to the religion this man professes? if indeed he comes forward as a proper man should, what shall you say to wedding with one who is a heretic, and who holds in detestation all that you call sacred?”

The burning colour rushes to my cheek. “I had thought it over, madam.”

“And what did you decide, my daughter, about so grave a question?”

“That I cannot wed a Protestant, but that I pray for his conversion first.” She smiles at my simple answer, but goes on again gravely :

“If there is no religion before marriage, you may be sure there will be none after.”

I am silent.

“Put all thought of this fellow out of your head, as discretion demands of a modest girl. Those meetings—chance though they be—will



not have raised you in his eyes. Men take a pleasure in trying to make women act with indiscretion to see if they can succeed, but, my child, they despise them in the end, and on the contrary, they admire those who cannot be persuaded to behave with imprudence."

And with that she leaves me, begging me to take her words to heart, and our Blessed Lady as a proper model of all true excellence and worth.

During this week comes Mr. Rising, his last visit before our Kitty's wedding day. He brings news that the Rev. Mr. Gage, now at Northminster, will say Mass for us in this part of the country on next great feast, being that of Corpus Christi. There is much joy at this rare bit of good news, for, alas for the faithful in these days! we must go Sunday after Sunday without hearing of Mass, the priests being few and far between except where some grand folk have a secret chaplain of their household. This one comes from staying at Ugbrooke Park, the seat of the Lord Clifford of Chudleigh; and my sister is all a-gog to hear what he will tell of the grand doings in the mansion, those of which we little country girls know nothing. As for me, my heart is too full of misery to care for anything

much, only I am thankful at the thought of the great privilege awaiting me of once more assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, and of going to my duties.

This day at dinner, when the cloth has been removed, and the beautiful summer fruit shines down into the depths of the polished oak table, purple, gold, and azure—heaped up currants, red and white, and strawberries on the old blue china dishes (brought out from mother's store-closet to celebrate Mr. Rising's visit)—the talk is of the late riots in Scotland on passing of the Bill for some relaxation of the Penal Laws concerning Catholics. The Scotch bigots will have no moderation in that country, and my father says we must be thankful that the Bill passed last year in Parliament without bloodshed in this country.

"I fear there is still some agitation on the question," says Mr. Rising; "there are those calling themselves 'the Protestant Association' who will in nowise listen to reason."

"But why should they be hard on us, who only worship God according to our conscience?" asks Kitty. "Surely, sir, we wish them no ill, and why cannot they let us bide in peace?"

Mr. Rising gives an approving nod, sending the colour into Kitty's face, though she looks down again hastily after her speech.

"Because," says he, "they think their own religion true, and will have no man differ."

"What of the Dissenters and other sects with manifold doctrines that disagree every man with his neighbour?" breaks in my mother; while I observe with some shyness, "It is altogether contrary to the tenets they profess, and, as Mr. Parson Beverley told me t'other day, 'private judgment is the basis of all true religion.' Why then, say I, can't you let us alone in our judgment, since it is a private concern?"

They all fall a-laughing at my pertinent remark; and then my father says, "This same Parson Beverley gave me his opinion on passing of the Bill last year. The sovereigns in Catholic countries are more intolerant," says he, "for they will in no manner allow those of another religion to set up houses of worship in their cities. Witness the Bishop of Rome, whom you call the Pope, will not allow a Protestant church within his city of Rome! He is the prince of bigots!"

"And, father, what said you?" I ask, while my heart beats with indignation at this insulting speech concerning our Holy Father, the Head of Christ's Church after our Lord Himself.

"I said, Joan, that since men's souls are of more account than their bodies, they who hold

God's truth to be One and Undivided do well to keep out heresy as they would keep out the plague-spot from their cities; and I asked him, 'What would you do if a fellow landed in Dover bringing the plague with him from across seas, and so made his way to London?'

" 'Why,' says he, 'I would have the city gates shut against him, and himself purified of his disease before ever he was admitted to spread the plague amongst his fellows. Let the apothecary work his will upon him with cup and knife, but never let him abroad lest other men breathe his pestilence!'

" 'Well said,' I rejoined; 'and if so sharp a remedy be necessary in the one case, what think you of t'other? since the plague destroys the body only, but false doctrines have power to hurl the immortal soul into hell-fire!'

" 'In what way are we bettered since the Parliament passed the Bill?' asks Kitty.

" 'Aye, indeed, we could scarce suffer greater indignities than we do at the present time,' exclaims my mother, with some heat. 'Our sons shut out from every honourable profession, incapable of serving in His Majesty's armies and navies, or practising in the law, and our children to be educated abroad, for which we are subject to fines, while we are liable to heavy punishment if we put them to school at home.'

"Happily, my dear wife, the law has not always put forth its utmost rigour, or our case would be miserable indeed," sighs my father. "Witness the Lord Bishop Talbot, my Lord of Shrewsbury's uncle, tried for his life at the Old Bailey for saying Mass. It was soon after King George came to the throne (I mean his present Majesty), but in times past he would not have escaped death as felon and traitor!"

"It was only for lack of evidence, the witnesses not forthcoming," says my mother; "and plenty of other innocent men for only serving their religion were prosecuted and imprisoned, and mine own brother Jocelyn deprived of his property three years ago,—can I forget it?"

She breaks off in a low tone and begins to weep, whereat Kitty and I go round to her side and essay to comfort her. Mr. Rising and my father go on with their talk in low earnest tones, and I learn that the new Bill brought into Parliament last year has not removed all penalties and disabilities concerning Catholics in England, although our priests cannot now suffer death as felons or traitors, and heirs of property educated abroad will not forfeit their estates as heretofore, and the power given to a near Protestant relation to take possession of a father or brother's estates can no longer be exercised.

This seems to me the most cruel and unnatural, that a child should be able to deprive a parent of his estate; and our country could only be Christian in name while so disgraceful and oppressive a law remained in force.

Here everybody's attention is suddenly arrested by the parlour door being thrust violently open to admit John and Sukey. The latter, quite forgetting her respectful reverence, has her apron thrown up over her head, while she gasps out;

"O, master, alack-a-day!" while John cries, "Madam, alas for Master Beverley."

It is some time before we can understand what they are saying, for the noise of Sukey's lamentations. My father, much alarmed, rises from his chair; my mother runs forward and catches the serving-woman by the wrist.

"What's amiss? What has befallen? Speak, and quickly, good creature," she cries. "Who is hurt? Give over crying and tell us."

"Master Beverley, madam," says John solemnly, and holding up both hands, "has been and fought a duel, and is bleeding to death. God have mercy on his soul!"

Then a swimming of all the chamber seems to come before my eyes, and I faint away into my mother's arms.

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## CHAPTER V.

## CORPUS CHRISTI.

THE fruit-tree blossoms make a snow-shower through the warm scented air. Kitty is playing ball in the orchard, and her merry laugh, when it lodges in the branches, comes to me where I sit, looking out of the casement on all this sweet scene. I wonder she can take herself to play so soon, but when she saw me out from my fainting fit, she ran off as light-hearted and jocund as ever.

“Joan, Joan!” her voice comes ringing up over the garden. She comes now and takes my hand. “It is weary work sitting down to wait for news. Come out, Joan, and be merry this fine summer’s day.”

I know she means it kindly, so I get my chip hat, and together we wade through the green uncut grass to my favourite seat in the walnut tree. Then she falls to throwing her ball, and my eyes grow dim with weary watching, while my ears tire with listening for the click of the gate,

and my father's return with Mr. Rising from the parsonage.

What news will they bring of poor Tom Beverley? I cannot bear to dwell on the thought of his danger, but believe that my dear fellow is the cause of his death—never! never! Yet who fought the duel? I can gather nothing more from Sukey and John, so must needs content myself with waiting. Slowly the long hours drag by on the green orchard grass under the fruit blossoms, and then I go to watch the sundial by the house.

It is near supper-time when at last they come. I hear their voices and shrink back across the lawn to the sheltering trees. What if he brings the very worst news a girl can hear—that her lover has been guilty of murder? Yes, murder! That he has fought a duel and killed his man! I think I hardly hear anything till Kitty—dear, kind Kitty—puts her arm round my waist.

“Don't tremble so, my dear,” whispers she. “I ran round by t'other gate, and Mr. Geoffrey told me your young gentleman didn't fight. It's all right—don't cry so, Joan!”

I am sobbing now, and I lean against her neat plaited kerchief, where my tears make sad havoc of her cherry ribbons.

“O, thank God! thank God!” I cry; and in



the same breath, "I knew he wouldn't do it, Kitty—I knew he would never be so base."

"It seems it was a thrust in the left side that did it," explains Kitty, "and poor Tom isn't out of danger yet; he nearly bled to death. Farmer Jerry brought him in his cart from Northminster."

"But, Kitty," I cry, bewildered, "was there a duel, then, after all?"

Then we sit down together on the grass, and I lay my head in her lap, and she tells me all she knows, of which the chief news to me is that my beautiful young Sir Harry is innocent. It seems that Mr. Beverley, like many another hot-headed young fellow, was intent on keeping his appointment, and sent another challenge to Sir Harry to meet him in a certain place on the road to Northminster, and answer for what Beverley called his insolent conduct to a young lady. The meeting took place, but Sir Harry declined to fight with one under age.

"Then explain yourself," says Tom, in wrath at the slight passed on his beardless lip.

But the gentleman scornfully declined to give any explanation of his conduct, which he declared to be honourable. Tom, in a fury, attacked him, when Mr. Giles Yorke, desirous of beating back his friend's assailant, tendered an

unlucky thrust with his keen French rapier, which nearly ended Mr. Tom Beverley's career once and for all.

"Mr. Giles Yorke has fled the country, in mortal fear of the law, and if the poor fellow should die, Sir Harry Chaucer will get into trouble for his part in the fray."

"But he acted like an honest gentleman and a man of honour, let who may gainsay it," I cry, proudly lifting up my head, then I fall into tears again, with "O and ah, dear Kitty, he is not mine, my father has forbidden us to meet again."

"Until he comes forward and waits on our father, as he should," says Kitty, willing to offer what consolation she can; "you may be sure he will, Joan, you may be sure he will."

And with that I content myself, and think why should one meet troubles half way? So I take myself to bed more cheerily that night; being a light-hearted creature, I cannot long repine. The next day comes good news from the parsonage, and for the next day again better and better, till at last I hear that Mr. Beverley is out in his mother's wheeled chair. I never try to see him, but Kitty goes and brings me word; and now we are come to Corpus Christi Eve, and our hearts can think of nothing but the feast.

"This year should bring the beginning of

many happy holidays, by God's grace," says my mother. "Joan, open the big chest, and let us lay out the vestments."

Then, when all is prepared, we set off to the kitchen, and make a great fruit pie and cake to do honour to the day. The Rev. Mr. Gage will be invited to dine and sup, and we all hope he may take up his abode in the neighbourhood, and say Mass for us on Sundays and holidays.

What a beautiful Corpus Christi Day, meet for the most glorious Lord Whom we celebrate, and the Miracle above all others wonderful. As I throw back the casement, I can hear the bees humming in the lime trees, and the birds singing, and see the roses all dew-covered down the garden beds, and a tiny blue haze that rises above the yew-tree walk and quivers across the six-acre meadow to the bright green copse beyond. I have heard my mother say how in Catholic countries the churches are all decorated to-day with fresh-strewn flowers, and many lights carried in honour of the Lord of all; and how, in times past, this day was held in veneration by the people, a high holiday amongst rich and poor kept in England. I pray the death of so many martyrs will one day bring back those happy days to this our land; since they suffered for the Faith, their blood cries out to heaven.

My musings are interrupted by my mother's call, and I go down to find her ready and Grey Peter with the pillion at the door; Sukey and John, all in Sunday best attired, and Kitty holding Mr. Rising's arm.

"Let me carry the baggage," says Mr. Rising, but when my father comes down, it is safely stowed in front of my mother, then my father climbs into the saddle and they set off, the rest of us following behind, and John and Sukey bringing up the rear. I see that all are provided with stout sticks, which causes no small wonder to Kitty and myself, till Mr. Rising explains that the times are so hard, we may meet with interference on our road, and it is best to be provided. But I do not trouble my head about such speculations. It is early yet and all so still; we only meet a rosy milk-maid in the lane, who stares in astonishment at our procession, and drops a courtesy to the quality.

"I wish you a fair outing and a happy home return," she says, thinking we be going a-junketing.

The early morning is so beautiful, my heart feels very light, and we pluck the wild pink roses in the lane, and would even decorate the old grey nag that carries my mother—who is too delicate to walk—and my father, sitting in front

of her, but the roses fall in the dust, and presently my mother calls to us.

"Kitty, Joan, get your thoughts together, now, for we shall soon be there. Think of the solemn act at which you are about to assist."

We are sober then in a moment, and fall back on either side of Mr. Geoffrey Rising.

"Let us bethink ourselves of Calvary," says he, "and the self-same Sacrifice offered there, and though this be unbloody inasmuch as Christ cannot suffer again, yet is He truly offering Himself to the Eternal Father in the Holy Mass for our sins, since He is a Priest *for ever* according to the order of Melchisedech. We should meditate on the pains and travail He underwent on our behalf. 'This do,' said He, 'in remembrance of Me.'"

We are silent now, pondering on the subject of this short discourse until the spires and pinnacles of Northminster town appear in sight above the trees. It is very quiet as we pass through the streets, but, going across the market place, we come upon eight or nine rough fellows sitting down to their breakfasts on the steps that lead up to what was once the old stone cross, hallowed by many a prayer in times gone by, but mutilated now by Protestant hands.

"Who be they? and where be they going?" asks one man of his neighbour.

"I know 'em," cried out another; "it's Mr. Papist Verity going to a Popish meeting!"

The fellow had done some jobs for my father and recognized him.

"Papists, be they?"

Some rough words follow, and' all get up to stare.

John and Sukey draw closer to us, and as we pass rapidly on, we hear their taunting cries, and see them wave their arms about; presently a stone comes whistling through the air. My father looks round to tell us never fear but follow on after him and our mother. So we cross the town and get into a field where stands our chapel, or what serves for such. It is only a barn lent by a friendly farmer, and stands beneath a big old oak, one of the patriarchs amongst trees, and its thick grey thatch half covered with ivy. Early as we are, Mr. Gage is already there. John assists our parents to alight, and then we go in followed by Sukey, while he fastens up the nag. Some half score of poor country folk are there, and the good priest is engaged in hearing their confessions. Kitty and I kneel down to await our turn. Ah, how good of our God to grant us so easy a pardon, and to allow the word of absolution in the mouth of one of His own creatures to seal His forgive-

ness of our most deadly sins if only we confess them with a real and lively penitence and a firm resolve by the help of His grace never to fall into them again. Then the altar is prepared by my mother's loving hands, and she cries with joy to see the priest put on the vestments so fair and goodly which she has made, and the little serving-boy lights the tall candles between flowers from our garden. I think I could shed tears, too, but rather more of sorrow when I remember that my love cannot be there to share in our blessings and kneel at God's altar, but he is in all my prayers :

"O Father of infinite mercy, have pity on Thy children : O Jesus, sacrificed for us, apply to us the merits of Thy precious Blood ; O Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, descend into our hearts and inflame them with Thy love."

And then the glorious song of the angels sounds across the gloom of the bare, desolate barn, and rings up into the wooden rafters, and in our hearts, as the priest's clear voice pronounces the hymn of praise :

"Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis. Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, adoramus Te, glorificamus Te!"

I see my dear mother's face lit up like sunshine, and my father scarce seems able to refrain from

joining with lips as well as heart in that glorious hymn. Can it be that the Lord of Glory will Himself descend into this poor place?

Mr. Gage, having read the Epistle for the day, from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, proceeds to give us a short discourse upon the Gospel, which is from the sixth chapter of St. John: "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed;" and he bids us observe how the unbelieving Jews found that doctrine hard to understand, and walked no more with Him, like people of the present time, who turn away from our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, saying, "How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?"

The priest turns again to the altar, and we all kneel in our places waiting for the supreme moment to come, like the people of Israel waited at the foot of the mount till the Lord should show His glory—only now it is not with thunder and lightning in the greatness of His Majesty, but in silence and lowliness He comes to us, obedient at the word of one of His own creatures. In an instant He is here at the words of consecration, and we bow down our heads and worship. How beautiful seems the scene around us now; the barn is our chapel, but all is changed since He is here, and the angels unseen by us who troop to do Him honour. Then presently the little



tinkling bell bids us approach and receive Him  
Who bids come to Him all who are weary and  
burdened, for here is rest and peace. After Holy  
Communion, given to each one gathered there,  
all is very still except for the priest's low voice,  
and then, when the Last Gospel has been read,  
we go out into the sunshine, brighter and more  
beautiful now to our happy thoughts than when  
we came.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## TO GRETNA GREEN!

"LOOK, Kitty," I say, "to the men outside the field; they seem waiting to see us come, and what scowls upon their faces!"

A soft breeze bends the heads of the tall moon daisies, the little pink flower-bells are twining up amongst the grass, and tiny cups of burnished gold lift their heads to meet us as we pass. But I am not looking at the flowers; my head high and my eyes flashing, I meet the men, who assail us with loud scoffs and jeers as we pass through the gate. They follow as we enter the town, and my father looks back to tell us to push forward with all speed. We are obliged to pass through the market, filled with loiterers now eating their dinners, for it is mid-day and the sun high in the heavens. They draw near and begin to threaten us.

"Down with the Papists! no Popery!"

Then one fellow, bolder than the rest, lays his hand on the nag's bridle.

"When was it law that Papists should ride? Give over this fine horse to better men!"

John, inflamed at his insolence, rushes forward to push him on one side, and receives for his pains a broken crown from the fellow's staff, which he returns in good earnest.

"No Popery! down with the sneaking Papist!" cry twenty voices or more, and they close round us, while my father tries to make his voice heard above the tumult. It would have fared ill with us, for we could make no way through the crowd; my father striking about him with his heavy riding whip to make a passage, while Mr. Rising does his best to protect my sister and myself from the angry mob, but unexpected help is at hand.

The noise being great, we cannot hear horse's hoofs, till suddenly a gentleman appears in our midst demanding in authoritative tones the cause of the tumult. Perhaps it is long fasting or the sun's heat upon my head that makes me feel so faint and giddy of a sudden that I cannot see his face, only the tones of his voice sound in my ears sending a thrill of joy. I hardly seem to know that the crowd have fallen back, and that we may go on our way unmolested. I only see that *he* is here, and that he is speaking to my father.

So we get out of the town into the long leafy lanes, and I hear Mr. Rising say, "Take heart, all will be well," and he looks so kindly

upon me that henceforth I count him my friend. Then how my heart beats when I hear my father saying, "And to whom are we indebted for our deliverance of this morning?" Is it possible that he does not remember a face that has become all in all to me? True, my father only saw the young gentleman once at the Christmas dance; but for me one look at those eyes was enough—could I ever forget them again? He turns to the handsome young horseman at his side, and raises his hat politely as he makes the inquiry. I see my love bend low to his stirrup, while he doffs his gold-laced hat, and answers:

"To one who would shed the last drop in his body for you or yours—Harry Chaucer at your service, sir, who hopes one day to be your son-in-law."

My mother speaks first, a pink flush coming into her face.

"We thank you, sir, for your good protection, but the matter you speak of merits other hearing, and we pray you to wait upon us at our house."

My father looks in surprise at what he no doubt considers her ill-advised reply, but he cannot say her nay. So a day is appointed, and at the cross roads Sir Harry Chaucer takes his leave. All this time he has not turned one look upon me, walking shyly at Kitty's side, but ere

he rides away, he bends towards me in the saddle with such a bow like a prince towards his queen, while I make my lowest courtesy standing in the road.

We go home to our late breakfast; my father and mother holding earnest converse all the way; Kitty, whose tongue never ceases wagging, finds a ready listener in Mr. Rising. Indeed, I think one of the charms she finds in her affianced lover is his lack of talk, while hers flows on unceasingly, though to-day I cannot join in it—my heart is too full to speak. I am so happy! I think that now all our troubles must end. When Sir Harry Chaucer has waited on my father, surely the latter will not refuse his consent.

I sing lustily all that afternoon while I sit in the arbour, under the woodbine trellis, and Kitty brings a book, though neither of us care to read. Mr. Gage will dine and sup with us, and after that ride back to Northminster. My heart sinks down into my shoes when I overhear my father say, "I cannot make up my mind to a Protestant son-in-law. She so young, what happiness could it bring her?" I do not wait for Mr. Gage's answer, but run away, away, I care not where, till my sister, coming to seek me, finds me crying in the orchard. "There is many a slip 'twixt

the cup and the lip," saith the old proverb, and sure enough my happiness slips suddenly away.

We are in the garden, with my mother picking raspberries, on the morning when Sir Harry Chaucer comes to ask my hand in marriage. How blue the sky is! the sun makes a dazzle of his gold-embroidered coat, and we see the glint of his spurs between the bushes as he rides up to the house.

"La, Joan, you're dropping all your raspberries," cries sister Kitty, as I stand with my basket tilted, unconscious of the ripe red shower at my feet. Mother has turned towards the house, while I stoop to refill my basket.

"Kitty, *he's* come!"

We neither of us say another word, but I roll up my fruit-stained bib and let down my sleeves, in case I may be called into the parlour. But no voice sounds across the lawn, and presently I go softly, guiltily, into the house and steal up the stairs to my chamber. I shall be ready there in case I am wanted. But no call comes. I can hear the murmuring of voices for a long, long time in the green parlour where my father sits, and then, after an hour has dragged by, Sir Harry Chaucer comes out and mounts his horse. My father goes with him to the door, and I hear loud voices on the threshold. Then I go to peep

from a passage window, for ours looks out into the garden, and I see him sit his horse with a stiff, determined air.

"I am sorry, sir," I hear my father say, "but a firm resolution is best taken at the beginning, and believe me, it is kinder to both, to say you 'nay' in the first instance."

"I will take no denial, sir; I repeat, I will not accept your refusal!" I hear him answer in passionate tones, and then he rides away. I see him turn his head, looking perhaps for me, but in that instant my heart is well-nigh bursting, and I sink down behind the curtain with stifled sobs. Ah, what a weary day, what a weary world! My head aches as the slow afternoon goes by; there are recipes to be written out; my mother is in her store closet; and Kitty and I sit pen in hand. I am writing one out "for a hoarseness," but I scarce see the words for the tears in my eyes. "Half an ounce of red rose leaves, a pint of boiling water, a large lump of sugar, and forty drops of spirit of vitriol." There is another for "want of appetite." But my tears fall and blur the fair page. "Take tops of the lesser centaury and camomile flowers, of each half an ounce, yellow rind of lemon and orange peel." I cannot go on, and Kitty hears a little sob.

"Joan, my poor Joan," she says, coming and putting her arms about my neck, "pray God it may all come right. But you yourself would not like to marry one outside the Church? See the misery of such matches, where the wedded pair cannot agree on the most solemn of all points—the chief end of man. There, Joan," she cries, forcing me to smile between my tears, "I am turning preacher to suit the occasion; and don't you think I should make a very pretty priest?"

"O, Kitty," say I, "of course I must agree. But I have always the thought that Sir Harry Chaucer would see the truth and be reconciled to the Church, if one would show him the way."

There our conversation ends, for my mother enters, and I feel too shy to speak more on this subject.

The next morning, unable to sleep, I rise early and walk so far down as the plantation. My head aches, and the cool breeze comes sweetly laden from the hay-fields, and there are larks singing overhead, but my heart is very sad. I hear footsteps in the lane, and before I can turn my head, a man comes up and puts a letter in my hand, and is gone again while I stand staring in surprise. With a beating heart I open it, and, at the first glance, see the signature; my first love-letter! It runs thus:



"Dear Heart,—I could not go without wishing you farewell. If you love me, as I believe you do, meet me, sweet, at the end of the lane as soon as you have received this letter. I shall be waiting there all morning. Do not add a cruel disappointment to the dreadful despair of your devoted

HARRY."

I do not pause to think, but unadvisedly, as it afterwards turns out, I run down the lane to meet my love. Since we must part, I would fain have one embrace of his, and tell him that I shall never forget him, but remember him always in my prayers, and wear him in my heart till death. So I run in my white morning gown—only a little white cap on my head, with a bunch of sky-blue ribbon, and white slippers on my feet. He sees me come between the long hedgerows, a little white flower against the green, and clasps me to his heart. My tears fall then gently.

"O, love, it is so hard to part!"

He answers, somewhat huskily as it seems:

"Nay, sweetheart, say not so."

I lift my head then and see to my surprise a coach awaiting hard by.

"What—are you going, then, so soon?" I say, for I had taken foolish comfort in the thought that he would be close by at Clavering Court, though we might not meet.

"I'faith the coach is mine, and thine, too, for that matter," he says, and I see his face flush. "Come with me—none can stand between us now." I start back in a moment, and he takes my hand gently. "Nay, then, come and see me go," he says with a covert smile.

I go near the door and see the steps let down, and try to force the dreadful word of parting to my lips. I am about to speak and tell him that I will pray for him, and that some day we may meet again, when he takes me in his arms, as I think, to bid me a last farewell; but he holds me so tightly that I struggle to be free. In a moment he has lifted me, in spite of all my struggles, my vain cries, "Good heavens! what is this?" my vain endeavours to be free. He has me within the coach; the door is shut, and for a moment I see the wicked face of Mr. Giles Yorke, and hear the words he whispers—"To Gretna Green!" Then my senses fail me, and I know no more!

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## CHAPTER VII.

## MARRIAGE—AND AFTER.

“Parents and guardians I defy  
Nay, e’en the Court of Chancery!”

—“GRETNA GREEN BALLAD” (1703).

How the rain comes splashing down, and the wind howls! We are on a rough, uneven way across a moor; and when at last I look from the window, it is on an unfamiliar scene, far away from my home in the Grange Farm. Sir Harry Chaucer has bid me to be quiet and accept my lot, which he would fain persuade me is a happy one, away from those who would prevent our union; but, alas! I think, what happiness without a parent’s blessing? Then I cling to him, for I am alone and very frightened; and at last his soft tongue and beautiful eyes have gone far to still my beating heart, and silence my reproaches at his treachery. I am easily consoled, being so very young. Yet it is with pale face and heavy eyes that I look out upon the road, and, even with his protecting arm around me, I shiver and sigh as I never sighed before.

Just as the mist clears away and the pale sun appears, I point out a distant speck upon the

horizon which, as it grows more distinct, proves to be a post-chaise driving at tremendous pace. My lover sees it, too, and I think his face grows pale.

"What is it, Harry? A robber? A highwayman?" I cry in consternation.

For all answer, he leans out of the window and shouts, "Gallop, postboy, gallop for your life! Only three miles and we're over the border." Then he tells me to be still and say my prayers. Nearer and nearer comes that flying post-chaise, faster and faster goes the coach. We have dipped down into a hollow, and now we rise the approaching hill, and the horses strain and labour, the coach swings and groans over the uneven road. The chaise has lost sight of us for a while, but, leaning out, I see it gain the summit of the hill and disappear into the hollow, following on our track.

"We'll do it yet," mutters Sir Harry Chaucer; and I see him set his teeth, and his bold eyes flash. I have never seen him look so handsome. I fear I know not what, and cling frantically to his arm. Suddenly there is a lurch which nearly throws us both down: the wheels have stuck fast in a rut, and the heavy lumbering vehicle comes to a standstill, while the serving-men jump down, the post boy flogs his horses, and

there comes a cheer from that distant pursuer that makes my heart stand still. It is only a second or two, and we are off again faster than before, but in that instant I can distinguish someone standing up and waving his arms, and I hear one of the servants exclaim, "He's there himself, it's Squire Verity!"

O Heaven, what a situation! my father himself in pursuit, and I can do nothing but weep and wring my hands!

"Take me back! O take me back!" I implore, clinging about his knees.

Then the tender look makes Sir Harry Chaucer's eyes seem dim with compassion.

"Poor lassie, poor little one, 'tis cruel, but I mean it all in kindness, as you will see for yourself when this day of misfortune is over. Would you go back to him, and never see me more?"

I can only weep and implore, "Let us both go back, and he will forgive us."

But Sir Harry Chaucer is not to be turned from his purpose. I know he means well and I love him dearly, but I cannot think his conduct just and right, for my conscience tells me it is wrong. How near the post-chaise comes! I can hear the horses' feet, as I kneel trembling in a corner where Sir Harry has placed me, with the blinds drawn down. The men are shouting and cheer-

ing on the horses, Sir Harry's voice rises above all, with his body half way out of the coach window.

"Twenty golden guineas if we do it! Gallop, postboy, and my purse is yours."

Then my blood runs cold, for there comes a loud report, and I hear our men shout, while there follows a crash and a sound like a heavy fall. Where is the post-chaise now?

"Let me look, let me look, Sir Harry, for the love of Heaven!"

"Nay, dear love, not for a million worlds;" and he drags me from the window. "'Tis naught, Joan, on my faith, only one of the horses fallen, perhaps a drunken postboy. My pistol gave them a fright, but did no worse harm. The squire will overtake us in an hour. Calm yourself, sweetheart, there is no cause for alarm."

And within the hour I have plighted my solemn troth to Sir Harry Chaucer, and we are married by Rorie the farrier on Gretna Green! No church, no priest; O God, can it be right? I am frightened, and can but obey, but my heart misgives me when my lover laughs, and says that Mr. Rorie is as good a priest as the best of them! I pray to be taken to Mr. Gage, and to this Sir Harry consents as soon as we reach London, where we are to inhabit the town man-

sion now his own by the death of his aunt. It is not till later I learn that the Church can give us no nuptial rite : we are already man and wife.

At first I seem as if a sea of tears cannot assuage my sorrow over our stolen union. I write long letters to my injured parents, and at last I induce them to extend their forgiveness even to my husband. My sister Kitty, Mrs. Geoffrey Rising now, is at her house not far from town, and there I meet my dear father and mother, and obtain their pardon at last for my unhappy marriage. They have even consented to see the author of all our trouble, and my sweet Harry has promised to prove himself a dutiful son, even though his first step has been one of such base treachery towards his father-in-law.

For myself, I can forgive all, such is my great love for him, and I have not much time for thought in a whirl of gaiety and dissipation, very foreign to my usual habits. The winter we are in mourning and quiet enough, but with the spring come such pleasure and delights I had never dreamed of in my quiet home at the Grange Farm. Too soon my sorrow wears away, and I allow myself the many gaieties pressed upon me by my husband ; routs and assemblies, Vauxhall, Ranelagh, and the parks !

There is no talk of religion now, and though my head is well-nigh turned by the admiration I receive, there is ever an aching pain at my heart for the one bond of sympathy which alone can knit souls together, heart to heart. Sir Harry's religion is not mine ; and once when I spoke of confession he fell into a fury, and swore as I had never heard him swear before. I did not cry, the pain was too great for tears, and then he came and took me on his knee.

"Little wife," he said, "pardon me if you can. I only know evil of what you hold to be a great good, so never breathe a word of it to me if we are to be friends."

He kissed me very gently, when I made no answer, and then he asked, "Joan, are you not afraid to profess a religion so hated by your husband, and you such a timid, foolish thing?"

"Sir," I said, speaking up boldly then, "I pray I may die first before I am false to the Catholic Faith." And then I fell a-weeping, and, slipping down upon the floor, embraced his knees. "You are my veriest joy, my own dear husband, but, O, indeed I love God better."

He put me from him then, not angrily, but with a pale, set face, and left the room. Since then we do not speak on religion, but I pray all the more. Only my constant toilettes and the fine



gentlemen we meet can keep me from that heaviness that hangs over me when I think of his hard, unbelieving heart. My mother sends me word that she and my father, with Kitty and Mr. Rising, are together in prayer for my husband's conversion. I little know how all our prayers are to be answered, but, if pain and trouble are before us, is it not better than the eternal damnation that awaits unrepentant souls ?

One day—I can never forget it—he comes in looking graver than usual. I am sitting in a bow window that overhangs the river ; my work lies idle while I watch the ships go by. Where the sun shines brightest I see a little bark which I feign to be Harry's, while the other smaller, by its side, must be mine. So, I think, we go sailing down the river of life, and I am just musing and dreaming when he comes in and walks up to where I sit in the bow window.

“No,” I say, going on with the thread of my thoughts, “I would rather we should both be in one ship, and that I take to be the beauty coming now, so trim and neat, with such white sails ; she should weather any storm !” Then I tell him my imaginings, and ask him whether his idea is not the same about a river of life

going on into the ocean of eternity? I have read it in a book.

"And my sweet will have us in the same ship," he says, and to my surprise his voice trembles as if with some hidden emotion. "You are right, Joan, there's only one ship for husband and wife to sail in, and I believe I've got it at last, little one."

I look wonderingly while he speaks, and then he takes my hands in both his own, so brown and small against his lily white, and I play with the dear fingers and count the jewelled rings.

"Joan," he says abruptly, "I have seen Mr. Gage, and am resolved to be reconciled to the true Church, as I believe her to be; God help me!"

How can I express my joy and deep thanksgiving?

"Kneel down, Harry," I cry at last, "and let us thank God."

My dear fellow is on his knees for the first time by my side. Who can tell the happiness of that first prayer together, or what graces it wins for us both! Then he tells me he has arranged to meet Mr. Gage at the chapel of a foreign ambassador, and there to be received into the Catholic Church. I am to be present, and I can scarcely eat or sleep until the day

comes. There is much talk of a great meeting at Coachmakers' Hall, with a young lord in the chair who has shown himself a warm partisan of Protestant interests. How these interests are assailed by 'the Papists' seems the watchword of the meeting, and though Sir Harry laughs at it, I feel so much afraid I can scarce summon up courage to go abroad.

"He puts poor Papists into disrepute," says my husband, "when God knows they only desire to be left in peace;" and then he laughs to see the petition, as long as the nave of St. Paul's sent into Parliament. It comes for his signature, with that of Lord George Gordon at the top; and, of course, my husband refuses to sign, while my face flushes at the novel sight of Sir Harry Chaucer as protector and defender of Catholics in his own person. O thank God for such a miracle of grace!

"What made you lose hold of the Protestant religion?" I ask him, while we walk in the still summer evening down the green lawn to the Thames, silvery in moonlight, at our feet.

"The subject has long been growing in my mind, though I endeavoured to throw it from me. I protest I have been the most sorry fellow for months past, trying to keep up a merry face with an aching heart beneath the mask. And

I have been cruel to you, my sweet wife; will you forgive me?"

He bends on one knee so chivalrously to kiss the tips of my fingers, and then bursts forth:

"*Holiness, union.* Your words spoken one day in this very garden set my brain thinking. My head seemed all on fire after that. The Church of England has no pretension to sanctity or true Catholicity, which means 'union.' Where is her holiness? where her union? Her priests are too much taken up with marrying and giving in marriage to attend to their duties; where you come on a fine scholar fresh from the universities he is too busy with his books and Greek manuscripts to look after the rustic population in which he finds himself, much like a fish out of water; and for the rest, they are riding and drinking like the best of country gentlemen. Look t'other day at Goody Wakeling's funeral. Parson Bentinck not to be found; and when Archdeacon Purdy came, he was so much the worse for liquor that the clerk had to put his surplice on, and hold him straight till the coffin was brought. And I know plenty like him, more's the pity, and none to cry shame. While they are eating and drinking away on their fat benefices the people get no instruction. Look at the churches. You don't know them, Joan,

but I do. Ladies and gentlemen at a country assembly could not behave worse, tittering and ogling one another behind their fans and gold eye-glasses, courtesies and bows interchanged between that young miss and this pretty fellow. And once inside the high curtained pews, half the congregation sleeps, while squire pokes his fire and heaps on coals, parson prays and preaches till the Old Hundredth wakes them up, and they lay aside their religion to come out next with their Sunday clothes. Things were not carried on so in Catholic England, I'll take my oath. Look at the mighty churches raised by our forefathers; it was a different worship then, and how are we bettered? Ask the parsons; they are all at disagreement and loggerheads on every religious question. We repeat Sunday after Sunday, 'I believe in the Catholic Church,' and it conveys no more meaning than sounding brass. I went to my Lord Bishop to get his opinion before speaking to Mr. Gage.

"'We hold,' says he, 'all the great truths in common; the rest may go by the wall, they are mere small differences.'

"'Come, my lord,' say I, 'that is hardly so. I am a man of few words, but, by your leave, we have differences on the most important truths. What say you to Baptism? Is it a sacrament, as the Papists hold?'

“‘Indeed,’ says he, ‘it is so held by the Church of England, but subject to qualifications like any other doctrine, not to be too narrowly defined by individuals.’

“I had come to one of our divines, holding a high office in the Established Church, and look what I got for answer. That disgusted me. You believe, Joan, in Baptism, and I have heard you speak of the Lord’s Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Do any of your priests warn you not to carry your doctrines too far? And do you think that priests in Germany or Italy would hold different opinions on such vital points?”

“I suppose,” say I, in answer to my husband’s question, “that the Holy Ghost cannot hold different opinions on matter of faith. And this is the cause of such perfect union throughout the Catholic Church, from the Pope down to the meanest cleric in a country village.”

“Well said! Ah, dear wife, I am no theologian, but, thank God, I have grace given me to remove out of this rickety old hulk (only pieced together by Harry the Eighth’s misdemeanour) to a boat that doesn’t leak or let in the water of adverse opinion, and that has been riding the waves securely for the last seventeen hundred years! Mr. Gage spoke to me

very solemnly ; he is a man of scholarly parts, and his answers were to the point everyone ; no beating about the bush or shilly-shallying, I can tell you. When I spoke about our Church and the disgraceful way things are carried on,—

“‘Mark you my words,’ says he, ‘one day, perhaps, the Church of England may awake from her lethargy and uphold Catholic doctrine again, and the Cross she now holds in detestation may come to receive the tardy honour her children have so long denied it ; but her hands are imbrued with the blood of martyrs ; she denies Christ our Lord in the person of His Vicar ; she can never be more than an apostate Church established by the law of England, and the creation of a tyrant king.’”

We are silent then, and only the gentle splashing of oars sounds on the river as the boats go by. Is it our last night together ? My heart sinks with some sad presentiment, but I think that, come what may, my husband is to be received into the true Church, and then what matter coming storms ?

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE ETERNAL TRUTH.

Count up thy loss and thy gain.  
Thou hast lost the joys of thy youth  
Thou hast grasped th' Eternal Truth ;  
O why shouldst thou reckon the pain ?

“SONGS IN THE NIGHT.”

The next day rises bright and beautiful over the sleeping city, and peeping from our window I can see the barges go by, rosy tints on their flapping sails, and hear the boatman's call to his fellows on this sweet June morning. All my fears are vanished, and I wake Harry with a joyous exclamation :

“To-day has come at last, and you are to be baptized into the Church of God, my own dear husband.”

“I dreamed it was a baptism of blood,” he says, raising himself on his elbow and looking at me very earnestly. I feel myself grow pale. “What can it mean ?” he asks, still looking at me steadily with his great beautiful eyes—I have never seen any like them !”

“It would mean martyrdom,” I say doubtfully, “but it is only a dream.”



"I will shed my blood for the faith, if that be Almighty God's will in making me a Catholic." Then, as I do not answer, "Can it mean that He asks it of me?"

No, no, no, a thousand times! I throw myself upon him. "He would never ask it!" And I add more lightly, trying to smile, "What makes you so melancholy? is it a fit of the spleen? I would laugh if only you didn't look so doleful, silly fellow!" But though I rate him, and we talk cheerfully again, a shadow of coming sorrow is here which I cannot shake off.

About mid-day there is a loud noise in the street, shouting and mingled hisses and cheers, drums beating and flags flying. We are all at the window in a trice, that is to say, my woman, Mrs. Sally, and some of the maids, while the men-servants crowd to the door. Sir Harry keeps his chamber and will not be disturbed; we are to go down to chapel late in the afternoon after dinner. I was sipping a dish of tea when the noise made me spring to my feet, expecting to see the march of some regiment going to the wars.

"What is it, Sally? Phœbe, Peggy, can you say?"

A multitude are passing by, ribbons flying, banners waving, and I clap my hands. "What a pretty sight!"

"Nay, madam," says Mrs. Sally gravely, "listen!"

Then above the tramp of feet and the shouts of the crowd, I hear some of these men are crying, "Down with the Pope; hang 'em at the gallows down with the Papists! no Popery!"

"What does it mean? what do they want?"

"It's the proclamation going to Parliament," explains Mrs. Sally, with the air of one who knows what she is talking about, "they are going to the Parliament House with a proclamation, no, I mean a petition, to get the Parliament gentlemen to listen to them and undo the good they've done in the way of us poor Catholics; they'd like us to be kept always in the background; it is a shame, and I hope they won't get what they've gone for!"

Of all our servants, Mrs. Sally is the only Catholic, but the others are not slow in giving out their opinions, following her lead, and all unite in condemning the movement. "If they only knew our young mistress, they'd change their tune," I hear one girl say to the other. "Her sweet ladyship would win any heart."

I go hastily into my husband's closet. "O Harry, those horrid people are going by the window! I have come to you for I cannot bear their cries." He, deep in his book by the table

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at the other side of the house, has heard nothing; it is one that Mr. Gage has lent him to study.

“What horrid people, sweet?” he says, laying a caressing hand upon my curls. He will not have them powdered, and I wear my hair in natural ringlets falling under my cap.

“Those people, the people who wanted you to sign a petition, you know! they are all passing now, hundreds and hundreds! Will you come and look?”

“Nay, nay, I had better attend to my book, and it is presently learnt; but if I leave it, my mind will be unhinged from my task. You go, my dear, and if it please you, report to me what passes.”

So I leave him and take my stand at the window. My husband's dream returns to my mind. If these people get their petition, who knows what may be in store for us? perhaps the penal laws be put in force again, and my dear husband fall a victim. Then I try to think of something else, and go to play some tunes and a song or two on the spinnet in the corner, but their horrid cries drown my voice; and presently the maids call me. The fine gentlemen are going with the procession, all the folk crowding to see them! I must not miss the sight. Something makes me hide myself behind the curtains so that I cannot

be seen while I look forth, and then I run again to my husband all palpitating with excitement.

"I have seen him!" I cry, "the ring-leader of the petitioners; he goes with them himself on foot, and the folk all cheered him! he's a pretty fellow enough, and looks marvellously well pleased with himself. He has on a gold brocade waistcoat, with a white cloth coat and breeches, the coat faced with silk of the same piece with the waistcoat, and a blue cockade in his hat!"

My husband smiles at this description of Lord George Gordon, and then I sit down near him till he has finished his reading. Presently comes a messenger with a letter, which proves to be from Mr. Gage, in which he begs Sir Harry to defer his reception into the Church until the following week, as it is said that twenty thousand people are to accompany the petition against the Catholic bill, and he fears a riot in which it may not be safe for Catholics to be abroad. To this my husband answers that he will in nowise put off his reconciliation to the Church of his forefathers on account of a mob of foolish fellows who will do themselves more harm than anyone else. So this answer is returned, but he will not hear of my accompanying him, since there is likelihood of a riot.

"We should be safe in a hackney coach," I implore him with tears in my eyes. "Ah, sir, do not leave me, let me be present on this the greatest day of your life."

Ah, little I know what that day is to see! Overruled at last by my objection to keep the house, he decides to let me accompany him, and we both go in to dinner, our hearts full of the one great subject. The sun is sending long golden ladders across the houses and the masts of the great ships when we set out.

"Mr. Gage could not give me an earlier hour," says Sir Harry uneasily, "and now, on my faith, I begin to wish I had not let you come, Joan; it will be late before we return."

We hail a coach and are soon carried through the streets at a slow jog-trot which much impatient my dear young fellow; and when presently we come to a standstill, he puts his head out of the window and asks the cause of the delay in no measured terms.

"We can't get on, they have barricaded this street to keep it clear for the procession."

"What procession, in heaven's name?"

"Why, sir, there are thousands going up to Parliament; they started this forenoon, and more was to meet 'em at Coachmakers' Hall."

Sir Harry jumps out to call a watchman to

order for this hindrance, but the poor man can only give the same answer as our coachman. We presently drive round by other streets until we reach our destination, much later than we had at first intended.

Sir Harry dismisses the coach some doors away, as he would not have us seen to enter the "Popish" chapel on a day when men's minds appear so heated against us. Good Lord! Mr. Gage has never received our answering message, and is not forthcoming. By dint of some exertion we succeed in getting into the chapel, which is locked, but is opened to us by a serving man, pale and trembling.

"Mercy on us! I thought you were some of the Coachmakers' meeting."

"Keep your wits about you, man, or you won't have them at hand when wanted. Do you know when Mr. Gage is likely to be here, since he has not received my letter, you say: will he be back before night?"

Yes, the fellow thought his master might be back any minute now, he would be here to watch over the chapel door since the streets seem in such a ferment and agitation to-day, and someone has chalked great marks all over the door and walls. "No Popery!" in white staring letters meets our eyes on every side. We go in and kneel in prayer.

An hour passes and Mr. Gage does not come. The dying sunlight creeps slowly out, lingering round the altar as though that must be its last resting place, where the God of light and love comes to his people. Loth as we are to retrace our steps, we rise up at last, for the hour grows late, and Harry fears for my safety. As we reach the chapel door, a sullen roar, like the murmur of many voices, comes from afar on the evening air. Someone runs in hurriedly, nearly knocking me down, and shouts out :

“Close the chapel door ! I fear they are likely to do us a mischief.”

Then he sees us ; it is the good priest, and he learns with dismay that we have been waiting for him. An earlier hour is appointed on the following day for Sir Harry’s abjuration of Protestant errors, and then Mr. Gage begs us to hurry home ; it is not safe to be abroad, he says. Sir Harry refuses to leave the chapel undefended, but Mr. Gage will not hear of his staying.

“It is not likely they will dare commit such an outrage in the teeth of his Majesty’s Government. They will not attack the chapel of a foreign ambassador.”

So we leave him, to make the best of our way home. To avoid the main thoroughfares, we go

a long way round, and Sir Harry calls a coach, for it is getting late. O how my heart beats when again those loud shouts are heard. "Down with the Papist! shoot 'em, hang 'em, drown 'em! no Popery!" And in the distant sullen roar of voices we know the cry is being repeated from a thousand throats. My husband laughs at my fears, and hopes that all may pass without mischief.

"Their bark is worse than their bite," he says, smiling at my agitation, but he himself looks anxious when the coachman stops to point out a red glow rising far west, and some hurrying by cry out, "Fire, fire! they are burning the wicked Papist houses!"

Sir Harry cannot laugh now, and telling the coachman to drive us quickly home, he explains his desire of going to the assistance of the unfortunate gentleman whose houses are being perhaps attacked by the mob.

"It may be only a panic after all," he says, "and a house set on fire for a mischievous joke. I will go presently and see, when you are safe within doors."

But Providence has otherwise decreed. Presently shouts grow louder, they seem to come from every side, and fellows with torches and blue cockades in their hats come pouring down



into the street we are just passing through. The coachman flogs his horses. "Down with the Papists!" he shouts, and the people cheer him while they let us pass. We make our way but slowly, and presently one of 'em catching sight of my husband sitting so erect by my side, calls out:

"Here's a fellow without a blue cockade; stop the coach, some of you. He's a Papist—a Papist, I tell you!"

The cry is taken up on all sides. The crowd are surging, yelling, round us. The torch-light glares like red threatening clouds over the sea of faces. All wear the blue cockade, and I whisper to my husband to snatch one and place it in his hat.

"Why, there's our Thomas, I believe," he exclaims, and I recognise one of our own people. At the same moment the serving-man sees us, and to my horror rushes towards us as well as he can for the concourse of persons round about the coach.

"Sir Harry and his lady! Sir Harry Chaucer who refused to sign the petition of the Protestant Association! Down with the Papishers! Long live King George the Third!"

"Aye, long live the King!" cries my dear young husband, throwing up his hat. But no

answering cheer follows; the people seem bent on mischief, the coach cannot proceed. The coachman begins to lay about him with his heavy whip, but some of the men rush forward and overpower him. They mount the steps, and one lays hands upon my gown.

"Papists! they shall not be suffered to proceed. Down with them, down! Confusion to the Pope and all the King's enemies!"

My husband forces them back while he tries to speak, but his voice is drowned in the tumult. Shots are heard, and some one cries "The soldiers are coming; give them as good as they give."

I see pistols levelled, and swords flashing out of their scabbards.

"Death to the Papists!" Death? when did it come? The horrid words have gone on ringing in my ears; it might have been a whole lifetime that dreadful knell rang out, until suddenly he, my love, my beautiful, is struck down at my side. How can I tell it? For a moment I have him in my arms, and hear him speak, while the life-blood wells out across my knees.

"Kiss me, dear heart. Ah, sweet! it is so hard to go from life and you!"

I hear his voice as in a dream. I bend and kiss the ash-grey lips and see where the blood

runs out, making a great pool on my dimity gown. I clasp my hands upon the place and try to stop the warm red stream: I move my lips trying to speak, but no words come. He is speaking faintly now. I can hear each whispered accent above the angry tumult round us, my ears are deaf to other sounds, for he is all the world to me, and he is going from me.

“Joan, pray for me, dear wife. Pray this may be my baptism. I die a Catholic, I believe in the One True Church.”

His eyes seek mine before his head falls back upon my breast, and I know my life is rent asunder, my love has gone to God. I kiss the marble brow, the eyes, the lips, beautiful still in death; but my love will not speak again, and all the anguish of a woman's broken heart cannot wake him from that sleep. I feel my senses leaving me; I can only cling about my husband's neck in the mute agony of despair, and so they carry us together, the living and the dead, through the night of darkness and confusion. Only when the great white light of Judgment Day comes to awaken a sleeping world shall I see the justice of God's Hand, even in this my great bereavement. O my beloved, pray that I may meet you soon!

THE END.

# ONLY A CHILD'S STORY.

BY

MRS. WILLIAM MAUDE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHILD COUNTESS," ETC.



# ONLY A CHILD'S STORY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THREE LITTLE BROTHERS.

Is it warm in that green valley,  
Vale of childhood, where you dwell?  
Is it calm in that green valley,  
Round whose bournes such great hills swell?  
Are there giants in the valley—  
Giants leaving footprints yet?  
Are there angels in that valley?  
Tell me—I forget.

—*Jean Ingelow.*

“WE’S goin’ to have noo f’ocks, ‘cause g’and-papa’s dead!”

The glowing firelight was flickering up through the tall bars of a high nursery fender, making long strange patterns across the ceiling, in weird fantastic dance. The little creature standing there was scarcely taller than the lowest bar, round which his chubby arms were clasped. His announcement was received with a solemn stare by a baby-boy seated on the hearth-rug.

He tottered to his feet and proceeded, with some difficulty, to take up his position at his brother's side, holding on to the fender as a support to his fat little person.

"What's that you say, Master Everard?" The nurse, in snowy cap and apron, with a baby in her arms, stopped in her slow walk up and down the room which had been accompanied till then by a low soft hushing. "What's that you say? You to talk like that, when the breath has hardly left your poor grandpa's body! downright wicked I call it, but children has no feelings!"

The author of this base sentiment stared in innocent surprise at the indignation he had aroused. He only repeated more earnestly, "We *is* to have *noo* f'ocks. Mother said so!"

"I'm quite sure your mamma said no such thing, speaking of dress at such a time," and she added as if to herself, "when everybody about the place is crying fit to put their eyes out!"

The offender was only four years old, and he answered by a sturdy "I'll beat you, Marda, (he meant Martha) if you say that!" and there was a defiant pout of his full red lips.

"Master Everard, you naughty boy! be quiet directly, or I'll tell your mamma of you! like I did last night when you were so rude, and you'll be sorry then."

"I shan't be sorry, Marda!" Master Everard appeared to be on the brink of one of his bursts of passion, and Martha hastened to quell the storm she had aroused.

"There, we'll say no more about it, get out your horse and cart; here comes Jessie with the candles," as the nursery door opened.

"No—it's mother!"

At that joyful exclamation someone entered,—a peculiar gentleness of movement, a soft rustling,—we can still remember in our nursery days how we hailed it as the sure sign of "mother's" entrance, different from all the rest of the world, though in what that difference consisted we could not have told.

There was a joyous crow, from the toddling baby on the hearth-rug, and a pattering of little feet to meet her.

"Mother, we *is* to have noo f'ocks, isn't we? Marda says 'no'!"

Agnes Evelyn was still beautiful, though time had brought silver threads into her hair, there were no furrows on her low white forehead, and her eyes would be always beautiful,—great hazel eyes, with a long fringe of dark lashes.

"What is it, Martha?" she asked. And as the explanation was given, she lifted the half-sobbing child upon her knee.



"We is to have noo f'ocks, isn't we, mother?" he insisted between his sobs.

"Yes, my darling, yes. Martha,——," the few decisive words she spoke to the nurse, were too low for the children to hear, and then she said softly, "Everard knows that grandpapa is dead?"

"Yes."

"Poor grandpapa was ill, and then God took him up above the sky."

"He'll be put in a hole to-morrow," lisped Everard.

"Only his body. Grandpapa has gone to God."

"Yes," said Everard, as if he understood all about it, and little two-year-old Charlie said "'ess," too.

This was the first the little brothers knew about death. Six months afterwards, the mourning clothes for grandpapa just taken off, were put on again when Mr. Evelyn died.

The children never knew their father, save Everard, who could just remember him, and on the day of the funeral, the little fellow lisped out his mother's words, "On'y his body'll be put in a hole,—father has gone to God."

John Evelyn had lived at Mountmore during his father's life-time, but at the old squire's

death, an elder brother came to take possession. Agnes Evelyn found it hard to leave the old place, that had been a home to herself and her husband for so many years, but Jack was with her, and she could bear it bravely for his sake, this sudden sinking from affluence to poverty. And then he died. She could scarcely bear this dreadful blow, her very senses seemed crushed and paralysed. She could think but of him, attend to nothing but what related to him,—and her one cry was, that she might not live now that he was gone. But Almighty God is ever ready to heal where He has smitten, to bind where He has wounded, and her overwrought mind returned to rest upon her children, who bore that dear husband's name.

She would tell them of their father, she would make their lips familiar with his name, till the smile came back to her face, and the light into her eyes.

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"We is to have noo focks," he insisted between his sobs.

"Yes, my darling, yes. M decisive words she spoke to low for the children to hear softly, "Everard knows dead?"

"Yes."

"Poor grandpapa was him up above the sky."

"He'll be put in a l Everard.

"Only his body. God."

"Yes," said Everard about it, and little "'ess," too.

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The children , Everard, who cou the day of the fu his mother's wor a hole,—father l

John Evelyn his father's li

death, as sister brother  
Agnes Evelyn found a letter in her  
place, that had been a letter from  
her husband for so many years. She  
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And then he died. She  
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## CHAPTER II.

## LABURNUM COTTAGE.

A boy—no better—with his rosy cheeks  
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,  
And conscious step of purity and pride.

*Wordsworth.*

It was a tiny house, nothing grand or imposing about it, that stood some yards back from the village road with an old-fashioned garden on one side, and at the back a green water-meadow where red and white cows wandered amidst some stunted willow trees.

The three little Evelyns, innocent babythings, in their crape mourning, had rolled in the long grass and plucked daisy-heads on the lawn, when first their mother came to live at Harlton. Now, Everard went to school, and little Cecil, the youngest, was just beginning to read words of three letters. The village schoolmaster was Everard's tutor. When his rustic scholars had finished their lessons, he devoted his spare half hours to the young gentleman. Everard could not be said to like his lessons, and he certainly gave a great deal of annoyance to the old man,

but Stephens was fully compensated for all his trouble by the honour of being "the young gentleman's" teacher.

Harlton was a quiet village, remote from all the world, and the three little boys, as soon as they were old enough, found ample room for their untiring little legs, without causing their mother any anxiety as to their trespassing on forbidden ground.

The neighbours with whom she might have associated were few and far between, yet Agnes Evelyn never felt dull or repining. She had an interest unspeakable and all-engrossing in educating those three souls entrusted by God to her care,—so different each,—yet each requiring the same tender fostering love.

It was of this she was thinking one summer night, when the sky was all aglow with the stars peeping and quivering above the grey earthmists, and her heart went up to God that she might be found worthy of her trust. Everard, sparkling and graceful, came before her mind; Charlie, sturdy and strong, a little man already at seven years old,—Cecil dreamy, blue-eyed, with such coaxing winning ways, bore her name, but, of the three, was most unlike her; for while the eldest was a true portrait of his mother, and Charlie like his father, with all the charac-

teristic determination of the Evelyn family, Cecil was "only like himself" the children said.

Mrs. Evelyn leant her head upon her hand, and pondered on the future of these dear ones, dreaming, as mothers will dream, all sorts of glories and bright hopes for them in coming years.

Suddenly a step startled her. Some one came down the garden path, and went out of the gate into the road. Mrs. Evelyn recognised her man-servant, a worthy individual who did everything, from working in the garden and cleaning the boots and shoes, to harnessing the rough little pony, and waiting at table. He always slept in the house as a protection to the little family.

"Why is he going out to-night?" she thought, startled, and called aloud to him. The man turned back and came to the open window in the starlight.

She was just beginning to speak, when, to her surprise, a childish voice broke in, and little Everard stood before her in his night-shirt, a small ghost in the half darkness.

"Oh, mother, why did you call Archer back? Archer's mother is ill, and he wanted to be with her just for to-night, and you were out, so I told him he might go!—I knew you would let him—

because you've got Charlie and Cecil and *me* to take care of you, you know!"

Mrs. Evelyn laughed, but the tears came to her eyes, as she folded the dear little figure in her arms.

"Never mind for to-night, then, Archer; you need not stay. But Evvie, you ought to be asleep! It is nearly ten o'clock."

"Cecil called me to see the stars shining; oh, they are *so* beautiful, don't scold me, mother, they are so jolly, and that's when I heard you calling out, and so I ran down to explain which I quite forgot I had promised Archer to do. And mother, don't forget, it's your birthday to-morrow!"

"I shall not forget, you may be sure. Did Charlie get up, too, to see the stars?"

"Charlie? Oh, no, we didn't wake him; he would only have grunted at us! Come and hear how he is snoring, mother."

In the half-darkened room each little bed stood white and shadowy.

With stealthy steps she entered, and little Cecil held out a cheek, rosy from sleep, for a goodnight kiss. Then all was silent, save the slow solemn ticking of the nursery clock.

The next morning, Mrs. Evelyn dressed as usual, and descended to breakfast, all uncon-



scious of the preparations for her arrival in the dining-room. The boys had been up and dressed hours ago, preparing their grand surprise for "mother's birthday." Jessie had been almost driven out of her senses by the boisterous mirth that had prevailed in the nursery regions since five o'clock, and it was with great disapprobation that she replied to her mistress's question: "Have not the young gentlemen been up rather early this morning, Jessie?"

"I should think so, indeed, ma'am. I have not had a moment's peace since sunrise."

Then, as she went down-stairs, it flashed across Mrs. Evelyn's mind, that to-day was her birthday, this accounted for the many strange sounds she had heard. She entered the dining-room. Breakfast was on the table, simmering urn and shining silver tea-pot, but her eye was immediately caught by the profusion of flowers scattered everywhere,—roses, geraniums, verbenas, and her pet virgin lilies alas!—there were only three of them in flower,—making a graceful festoon on the summit of the urn; She could hardly restrain a cry of dismay, but carefully concealing her feelings, she walked to the open window, the glass doors were thrown back.

The three children were singing on the lawn to the accompaniment of a concertina played by the village schoolmaster.

It was a serenade, and this accounted for the mysterious practising of the last few weeks.

The words were very appropriate, the boys thought. Everard had chosen his mother's favourite hymn :—

Saint Agnes, holy child, all purity,  
O, may we undefiled, be pure like thee !

He had lately learnt the lines by heart, and was determined to have them. At the close of the fourth verse, when there seemed likely to be a pause, Agnes Evelyn stepped through the window, and expressed her thanks for the honour done her, in all due form.

As she did so, she glanced rather fearfully round the little garden. Not a flower was to be seen. The boys had picked every one ! Could she expostulate ?

“ We knew how pleased you would be, mother, and the lilies you are so fond of, we picked them on purpose for you ! ”

How little had she known the ruin contemplated, when she had so inadvertently praised their beauty the night before !

They all came in to breakfast, Cecil dragging Mr. Stephens by the coat-tails.

“ Mother, make him stay and have breakfast with us, just for once,” pleaded the little fellow

So the nervous schoolmaster, with much blushing, sat down, but except for the honour done him, I think he would have made a better breakfast in his own home.

The children went hopping and dancing round the table, admiring their own handiwork.

"Isn't it pretty, mother? do you see everything? were you surprised? had you guessed what we were doing,—did Jessie let out? and mother, look, I did that! Charlie put the lilies up there—Cecil thought of it. How do you think they are fastened?"

"String, I suppose."

"Yes. Small white string; we bought it at Mrs. Brown's, that day when you must have wondered so what we were doing—when you went to call at the Grange, you know, and we stopped outside."

"And mother," cried Everard, speaking with his mouth full of bread-and-butter, "the music of the thing we sang, took such a time to learn, and Charlie was such a muff, he could never sing in time; Ciss sang best, didn't he, Mr. Stephens?"

"My little Cecil," said his mother, tenderly, "I know he loves singing."

"Master Cecil has a great talent for music," said the schoolmaster, "and will sing well some day, I doubt not."

"Sing, oh I should like to sing like a *real* man!" said Cecil earnestly.

"You couldn't sing like a pretence one, I suppose?" said Charlie.

"I don't mean 'pretence,'" said the little fellow; "I mean,—I mean—" he hesitated to find words in which to express his feelings.

"A great singer, quite grown up, that is what you want to be," said his mother; "perhaps it will come some day, who knows?"

That afternoon being a holiday, they drove into the woods and had tea, gipsy-fashion. Archer did not come, and the boys were proud to be their mother's sole protectors. Everard tied up the pony: Charlie lit the fire. Little Cecil liked to pick tiny pieces of moss where the sun shone on them, and bring them to his mother. At last, tired of wandering, and having done ample justice to the tea, they sat down on a grassy hillock, and watched the setting sunlight come streaming through the trees. A sudden hush seemed to have fallen on everything, even subduing the children's noisy mirth.

Their mother's thoughts reverted to the last birthday she had spent at Mountmore with her husband, and a long deep sigh escaped her, unawares.

"Mother's thinking of father," whispered

Cecil. "Be quiet," Everard reproved him, and Cecil, unwilling to submit to his brother's dictation, said loudly :

"I may say that, mayn't I, mother?"

"Say what, dear child!"

"That you *was* thinking of father."

"Yes, surely. I like my darlings to think and talk of their father, because one day they will see him."

"See him?" cried Everard.

"I don't know how that'll ever be," said Charlie in his careless way, peeling a green stick with his pocket-knife as he spoke.

"Mother means up in heaven," said little Cecil softly.

The sun was sinking quite down now, and grey shadows came creeping up over the tall beech trunks. A bird went skimming across the sky, and the faint far-off rustle of a coming breeze sighed through the wood.

"I mean to be like father, when I'm a man," said Everard, and Charlie echoed his words.

"Father can hear the *real* music now, mother, can't he?" said Cecil, looking up with his soft blue eyes.

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## CHAPTER III.

## IN LONDON.

Happy he

With such a mother! faith in womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him, and though he trip and fall,  
He shall not blind his soul with clay.

*Tennyson.*

DAYS and weeks rolled on at Harlton without a change in their uneventful course. Every morning at eleven o'clock, Everard went off to school, and whilst the village urchins shouted in the play-ground, pored over the Latin grammar and "Walkinghame's Arithmetic" with the ever-patient Stephens. Every evening, when the lessons for the day were done, in the garden or by the fireside, the little brothers sat listening to the stories their mother read aloud to them.

Charlie liked about soldiers best, because their father had been a soldier; Everard liked travels, but Cecil wanted it always to be "about singing." It was a difficult task to please each, but there was never any disputing. All was amicably arranged when "mother" finally named the story she preferred.

"I think," said Everard one day, "that we are the very happiest boys in the world to have our mother all to ourselves! And mother, isn't 'Laburnum Cottage' a lovely name for our home?"

Mrs. Evelyn could hardly give a cordial assent to this opinion. "Not so pretty as 'Mountmore,'" she said.

"Oh yes, mother, much prettier, a *great* deal, I think!" Everard answered.

They were very happy in those days, no world-stain had come to mar the simple purity of their large young hearts; they had safety under the shielding wing of a mother,—the guardian angel whose fostering care is a type of the boundless love in Heaven which overshadows all the human race.

Two or three steps from the garden gate, just at the end of the village street, stood a grocer's shop, the general repository of the place. Besides the usual stores which are comprised in grocery, toys and sweetmeats were sold, and of these latter the little Evelyns were the most constant purchasers. Mrs. Brown had always a nod and a smile for "the young gentlemen from the cottage," and they had an unlimited admiration for her gorgeous cap-ribbons and long shining ringlets.

Mrs. Evelyn's friend, young Lady Meredith, had often endeavoured to persuade her to make her home in London, but hitherto Mrs. Evelyn had resisted every entreaty. Now as the boys grew older, she began to think of the advantages to be obtained in the way of schooling. "What, leave dear old Harlton!" they had sorrowfully exclaimed when first they heard of it, and Cecil shed some tears. He had obtained permission from his mother to sing in the church choir, and now it could never be. But he had no cause to regret the change.

Within a few steps of their new home in South Kensington stood the large church dedicated to the English Martyrs. The singing here was far-famed and beautiful, even to the most fastidious ear, and the little Evelyns were wild with delight. Cecil declared "it must be just like Heaven."

He had always listened with intense admiration to the rustic choir led by Mr. Stephens at Harlton, but at the church of the English Martyrs his little head was fairly turned with wonder and delight. He saw the white-robed acolytes file slowly to their places, while the organ pealed and wailed in its beautiful pathetic tones. Mr. Stephens had prophesied that the boy would one day be a singer, and so it really came about.



London was very different from the old life at Harlton, and the boys did not like it at first. The restraint was irksome, and to add to their difficulties, they must always wear gloves, and put their hats on in a straight and proper manner, or Mrs. Evelyn would not walk with them! this was a great grievance. But these conditions fulfilled, mother made it as pleasant for them as she could, "walking her legs off with those boys!" her friends said, toiling many a weary mile on winter afternoons, that Everard and Charlie might not have to come home alone in the dark. They both attended a large College as day pupils, Mrs. Evelyn's only regret being that the boys with whom they must associate were of the middle class, but her means were not sufficient to allow of a grander school. Sundays and Saturday half-holidays were spent at home.

Mrs. Evelyn had plenty of society when she chose to avail herself of it, but, except her old friend Lady Meredith, they saw but few people.

One sultry July day, when the rush of the London season was at its greatest, Agnes Evelyn walked into Hyde Park accompanied only by Cecil; the others were at school.

It was not often that she chose Rotten Row during the fashionable time, as the place for her

morning walk, but this was a special reward to Cecil for lessons duly performed. He went jumping by her side, and exclaiming in his high shrill tones at every fresh horseman that caught his attention, and expressing his admiration to the great amusement of the loungers at the railings. "Oh, what a lovely, dear little pony! Mother, look—that chestnut would do for Charlie and me, and the beautiful black horse for Everard! and then the white one with the lady,—the white one, look, mother, you could ride the white one,—isn't it jolly? oh, I wish Evvie and Charlie were here to see them all!"

She glanced at the little figure in its sailor blue, and bent down to admonish the owner of the curly head and straw hat, to speak more gently, when she was suddenly startled by a voice exclaiming—"Agnes, is it you!" A friendly hand grasped hers, and a familiar face,—golden hair and sparkling eyes,—was she dreaming?—glanced out upon her from the crowd.

"Di Slingsby! how glad I am—" she could say no more, her eyes were brimming over.

"Glad? so am I! Don't stare so, my dear,—though I have just come from abroad, I hope my apparel is not so very different from the natives,—but tell me, how did you get here?—where are

you living? I thought you had taken root in the country for good and all. Is this Everard, my godson? what, no, Cecil?—”

Mrs. Evelyn's hand was clasped in the delicate glove of a tall, fashionable-looking woman, somewhat younger than herself, with a rather worn looking face, that must once have been beautiful. Cecil wondered who it could be, and stood staring open-mouthed, while his handsome stately mother, an unwonted flush on her pale face, smiled and talked to the stranger, and was introduced to other strangers by this new acquaintance.

“Will she never have done?” he thought, as he stood twisting and turning about first on one leg then on the other. Presently, the “Come, my boy, we must be moving,” made him spring to her side, and together they crossed the Row, and left Hyde Park by the Albert Gate.

“Mother, who's that? who *was* that?” Mrs. Evelyn appeared lost in meditation, and only replied when appealed to for the third time.

“That was Miss Slingsby,—cousin Di.”

“What! Everard's godmother?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, mother, only think!”

By this time, they had reached the house. The door was opened. Everard and Charlie

stood on the stairs expecting them,—for to-day was a half-holiday.

“I say, who do you think we’ve seen?” cried Cecil excitedly, “Miss Slingsby! Cousin Di, mother calls her.”

“Same as Everard’s Miss Slingsby?” asked Charlie laconically.

“*My* Miss Slingsby?” cried Everard. He had been accustomed so to call her ever since he was old enough to read her name written in his big morocco prayer-book.

“Yes, your cousin Di.”

That evening, when Charlie and Cecil had said good-night, Everard, who in virtue of his seniority, sat up half-an-hour later, drew his chair close to his mother’s, and asked her to tell him about “Cousin Di.”

“Why haven’t we seen her all this time?”

“She wrote to me when we left Mountmore, but I was in such grief and trouble then, that I had no time for correspondence, and then she went abroad for her health. It was six years since I had seen her.”

“I was four when we left Mountmore, wasn’t I, mother? for I’m ten now.”

She passed her hand lovingly over his brown curls,—the same rich hue as her own.

“I wish we had a better school for you,” she said.

"Oh, mother, the college is very good for real learning, though some of the fellows are dreadful snobs, I suppose; but as we are poor, I shall have to work,—you said so, didn't you, mother? and one learns more at Albert College than at a swell place, you know, Maynard says." Everard delivered this speech with a very grand air.

"Who is Maynard?" asked his mother, amused.

"Maynard? oh, I forgot, you don't know him," and in pity of her profound ignorance, he proceeded to explain who Maynard was.

"He is one of the big fellows high up, and yet so kind to Charlie and me, and looks after us,—and won't let Charlie be bullied,—because Charlie *will* fight everybody so that he's always getting into no end of a row,—but Maynard stands up for him. His father's a dentist, and he knows an awful lot about teeth himself. Why, mother, he could stop every tooth in your head, he really could, without hurting you, he says,—oh, Maynard is a great chum of mine, though he is such a big fellow."

"What you boys call 'chums' is just what cousin Di and I were as girls together. They used to say I loved Di Slingsby almost as much as your father."

Everard put up his hand caressingly to her cheek.

"No one could help loving *you*, mother, I should think!"

How often afterwards the boys looked back to those talks with mother in that little quiet room.

Had she not helped each one of them in every scrape and trouble?

When Everard and Charlie got into that "dreadful row" about the crackers found under the head-master's chair, was it not mother who composed the letter of apology, and made matters right with Dr. Forbes?

The hot breath of the streets came through the half-open window. A solitary cab went rattling over the stones.

"Mountmore is a very big place isn't it, mother?" Everard asked.

"You can't remember it, Evvie."

"Yes, just a little. I remember the nursery, and old what's-his-name,—who used to give me rides on his back."

"Henham the butler?"

"Yes, and Jessie tells us that he said (when grandfather died), 'it's a pity Master Everard's father isn't going to be master instead of Mr. William.'"

"Hush, it was wrong to say that, but Jack was so popular with them all."

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## CHAPTER IV.

## COUSIN DI.

Let me be slow to do my will,  
Prompt to obey,  
Help me to mortify my flesh  
Just for to-day.

"How curious," said Mrs. Evelyn, standing by the breakfast-table, next morning, "talking of Mountmore last night, and this morning I have a letter to say that Carrie Evelyn is very ill."

"We must pray for her at Mass," said little Cecil, solemnly.

"How unhappy uncle William and aunt Caroline must be," said Mrs. Evelyn. "Poor things, their only child! she has never been strong. Indian life told upon her in her early years—and she is only nineteen, poor girl! Everard," she broke off, "cut the bread, and do not let us be long at breakfast, or we shall be late for Mass!"

"Is she at Mountmore?" asked Everard.

"No; for the last six months they have been at Cannes, and this letter is dated from there."

The bells were beginning to ring as the boys caught up their hats, and their mother descended the stairs. There was a moment's delay while Charlie looked for his gloves, which after all were found in his hat, and another pause at the street door, while Everard ran back for his prayer-book, and then they proceeded across the square and into church, with a long stream of people all moving in the same direction.

More than one head was turned to look at the tall graceful woman, and her three handsome boys. Everard led the way in at the church door and up the aisle, his eyes wandering, I am afraid, and his head turning in every direction, trying to see who was in church, before he reached his seat. Mrs. Evelyn followed, her hand on Cecil's shoulder, and Charlie's short sturdy steps brought up the rear.

Cecil's great object was to kneel as long as his mother, and though his knees ached in the attempt, he never rose till she did. Then his eyes fixed themselves upon the priest, as soon as he appeared at the altar. Father Mordaunt preached, and he observed the dreamy eyes, with their steadfast gaze, fixed upon him. In the afternoon at Benediction, the young priest heard the thrilling tones of the boy's voice, rising true and pure, in our Lady's Litany.



The very next day Father Mordaunt came to call on Mrs. Evelyn. She was sitting with her boys around her, one on the arm of the chair, another on her lap, and the third at her feet, reading aloud a story, which appeared to be interesting, to judge from the eager, upturned faces.

"There's a ring and a knock!" cried Everard.

"It's cousin Di, I expect," said Charlie.

"May I open the door, mother?" asked Everard, in great excitement, starting to his feet.

"No, dear, sit down, Jessie will go."

A minute elapsed, and then Father Mordaunt was announced.

"Oh," cried Cecil, in a disappointed tone, "we thought you were Everard's godmother!" Whereupon, the visitor smiled, and gave the boys such a cordial shake of the hand, that their hearts were won at once. Father Mordaunt was tall, his forehead broad, his eyes deep set, and his mouth had a smile lurking about the corners which the boys saw at once. They regarded him with some awe, except, indeed, Charlie, who feared no one, unless it was the head master of his college!

The purport of the priest's visit was soon told. He had called some days before, but Mrs. Evelyn was out. He now came to propose

her youngest son's admission into the church choir.

"What! little Cecil," she exclaimed in surprise; "and how did you know he was musical?"

"Is this Cecil?" asked Father Mordaunt, laying his hand on the little fellow's head, "I heard him singing at Benediction."

Cecil's face flushed, and bright drops stood in his eyes.

"He need not be shy," he hastened to add, "we have two boys quite as young."

But Cecil was almost crying from pleasure.

His quick sensitive nature was soon aroused, and he was too much overcome to speak.

"How old are you?" asked Father Mordaunt.

"He will be eight next month," his mother answered for him, and added doubtfully: "Everard is only eleven, and Charlie a year younger; but is not eight years old too much of a baby?"

Father Mordaunt smiled again, and on meeting a pair of entreating blue eyes, uplifted now, and fixed upon his face, said: "Have we your permission, Mrs. Evelyn?" and then Cecil gave a great sigh of relief, when he saw his name written on a printed card, which Fr. Mordaunt drew from his pocket.

"You will like to sing in God's service?" he asked, bending his tall figure towards the boy.

Like it? Cecil could only give another of his earnest looks of deep pleasure, as his blue eyes met Father Mordaunt's gaze.

That night he could hardly sleep for joy. When he did sleep, it was to dream of a heavenly choir, where the men and boys had angel's wings, and the music sounded, it seemed to him, like the ripple of the crystal waters, before God's Throne.

The next morning, a knock came at Mrs. Evelyn's bedroom door. She knew by the sound that it must be one of the boys.

"What is it you want? you cannot come in;" she called through the keyhole, "Everard?—Charlie?—which is it?"

"It's me, mother," was the answer.

"You, Cecil! You can't come in just now, dear boy, run away, and be back in ten minutes."

"Mother—"

"Well?" still through the keyhole.

"When am I to go into the choir?"

"When what? I can't hear, dear."

"When am I to go into the choir?"

"Oh—," she smiled to herself, "very soon, I hope. Run away now, my child."

"When do you *think*?" he persisted.

"Next week, perhaps."

"Next week, next week!" Cecil repeated to himself, and he went dancing down to breakfast. Everard and Charlie were already there, engaged in examining the letters they had just taken from the letter-box on hearing the postman's rap.

"One for Jessie," said Everard, holding up a long narrow envelope with "Miss Tomkins" written upon it. "I wonder now, if that's from Archer at Harlton."

"Or perhaps from Mrs. Brown," suggested Charlie, who had a pleasant remembrance of the grocer's shop.

"No, there is Sheffield on the postmark."

"Jessie doesn't know anybody at Sheffield," said Cecil.

"Unless Larkins' daughter is on a visit there," suggested Everard,—Larkins was the cook.

"No, she lives in Wales," rejoined Cecil, who seemed to be well up in the Larkins' family movements, but the mystery was left unsolved; there was another letter addressed to their mother, and its pretty, fanciful monogram attracted their attention at once. It proved to be from cousin Di.

"She proposes herself for a visit at the end of the month," said Mrs. Evelyn; "we can manage that, can't we Everard?"

She generally appealed to him as the eldest,

and he was proud of the confidence it seemed to show.

"Oh yes, mother, she can have my own little room, you know; and I can double up with Charlie and Cecil."

"Very pleasant for us, certainly," said Charlie; "why, mother, you don't know *him*," indicating his brother with a disdainful nod of the head; "he is always standing in front of the glass, doing his precious wig or something! and Cecil and I can never get near it!"

"A fellow must see to put his tie on straight," retorted Everard, who was a dandy.

"You muff! you think of nothing else," said Charlie disdainfully. Out of mere contradiction to his elder brother, he affected a slovenliness of dress that often brought well-merited reproof upon him. Everard accepted the challenge by throwing himself on to Charlie's neck, and in another moment both boys rolled on the carpet, locked in each other's arms.

"Come, come, no wrestling," cried their mother, and they got up at once, then, only a few growling remarks across the breakfast table showed that the argument was not at an end.

Half-an-hour later, the house was unusually still, they had both gone off to the College, and only Cecil sat with knitted brows over a long-

division sum. His attention was wandering, and his mother shrewdly guessed that the choir was uppermost in his thoughts.

"Cecil, what are you thinking about?" she asked, when he had bungled over eight times six, and informed her that William the Conqueror was the first of the Saxons. "Try and give me your full attention now, and this afternoon, I will take you to the Presbytery."

With this promise in view, Cecil worked better for the next hour. The heat that day was more than usually oppressive, and the sun was shining in full force, when Mrs. Evelyn and Cecil set out. Father Mordaunt was not at home, and the servant directed them to Mr. Edwards, the choir-master and organist.

Cecil's little heart beat fast as he stood on the threshold of what seemed to him a magic place.

"Will he have me? what will he say? oh, mother, what *will* he say?"

Mr. Edwards received them most graciously.

"Father Mordaunt had mentioned a new boy; he was extremely pleased to place the young gentleman's name on the choir books; he would proceed to make himself acquainted with the young gentleman's voice."

Mr. Edwards wore a shiny black coat, very much the worse for wear, especially at the

elbows; his hair, which was thin and black, fell back in long waves from his wrinkled forehead; he was not old, but the wrinkles had come from a habit of staring fixedly with his eye-brows puckered into a ridge. Cecil thought him a very grand man indeed.

The room in which they sat was cluttered with music of every description, most of it his own composition, for in his way, Simon Edwards was something of a genius. He had plenty of work, too, for there were constant services to attend, and music to be prepared anew every Sunday. He requested Mrs. Evelyn to repair to the church, "and there, madam," he said, "I will try the young gentleman's voice; my bit of a violin here would be no accompaniment."

To Mrs. Evelyn's intense relief, they left the stuffy little room, which smelt something between rotten apples and old parchment, and found themselves in the street, beneath the hot glare of the July sun. They went into the church. How refreshing the grey solemn stillness of the holy place, after the world's noise and traffic outside! One or two people were kneeling there. As they passed up the aisle, Cecil saw a Sister of St. Vincent of Paul, in her white wing-like cap and blue dress of serge. The boy thought he had never looked upon a

face so calm, so lovely in its perfect peace, and the wish sprang up within his soul, that he too might belong to God as she did. The Sister rose from her knees and hurried away to her daily work, all unknowing that a holy dew had fallen from her gentle face upon the young boy's soul. Mr. Edwards struck the organ, and the hymn thrilled forth—

Jesus! the only thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast—

Cecil, trembling with eager nervousness, went quavering and faltering after it, until the old familiar words and tune reassured him, and his voice rose through the vaulted roof with a burst of song—

No thoughts can reach, no words can say,  
The sweets of Thy blest Name.

As the last notes of the *Amen* died away, he stood flushed and trembling, waiting for the verdict of the great man. "Good, very good!" whispered the organist approvingly; "you have the making of a singer, a good ear, and that is much,—and *soul*,—and that is a great deal more!" The bell was ringing for Benediction, and after a few whispered directions as to books or lesson hours, happy little Cecil was dismissed. But he



stood there still, and Mr. Edwards did not send him away. Mrs. Evelyn hurried softly to her place in the church. People were hastening in by twos and threes, a clock struck. The bell stopped. Mr. Edwards began to play.

In the dim rich colouring of the beautiful church, four or five acolytes came filing in, the priest followed.

Standing in the shadow of the great organ, Cecil joined unseen, for the first time in the choir of the English Martyrs.

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## CHAPTER V.

## THE YOUNG HEIR.

What is a mother's love ?

—A noble, pure and tender flame,  
Enkindled from above.

—*Montgomery.*

THE sun rose, and even in London it was a glorious day. The light went flooding everywhere, the summer morning had come down into the smutty streets. The trees in the great squares were drooping and dusty, the gay tulips and geraniums in the parks were fading and withering in the glare. Diana Slingsby stood on the balcony of a great house in Grosvenor Square. A cool awning stretched above her head, and the faint sweet smell of rare flowers came from the great china bowls standing all about the stone balustrade. She held some open letters in her hand; they informed her that the heiress of Mountmore was dead. The "Evelyn family" in general had not until now taken any notice of "poor Jack's wife and children," so that it was with some surprise that Miss Slingsby received letters from these kind relations, asking for some

account of her visit to Agnes Evelyn, and requesting to know "what those dear little boys are like!"

"Le roi est mort, vive le roi," kept running in Miss Slingsby's head as she sat down to answer a letter from one of the numerous Evelyn cousins. "Poor little Carrie!" she thought, "if you had not taken your departure from this world of woe, nobody would have troubled their heads about Agnes Evelyn's children." Jack's choice of a wife had not been approved by his family, and though she had been loved by the old Squire for his son's sake, upon the Squire's death followed so soon by that of his favourite son, the widow had felt all the scorn and cold neglect that had been only withheld for a time, and seemed all the harder for that.

A few days later, Miss Slingsby sat in Agnes Evelyn's tiny sitting-room, at the old leathern writing-table, that had been a wedding present from herself to the young couple. Flowers filled every available glass or vase, showing that Mrs. Evelyn did not want for friends. Miss Slingsby wrote:

"As you say, Aunt Lavinia would like to hear something of my visit here, I put pen in ink to give you a graphic description to the best of my powers. I have been here since my

mother and sister left town, and very charming it is, for Agnes is as nice as ever, or rather nicer, if that can be! The boys are delightful little fellows. My godson Everard (at this moment nearly driving his godmother to distraction by whistling and drumming on the window-pane to the tune of 'Nancy Lee'), is eleven years old, and makes me feel so ancient whenever I look at him! Charlie such a pickle, comes next, not so handsome as my Everard, but as obstinate, or I should say *determined*, as the Evelyns all are! Both he and Everard go to a large college near here as day pupils. I believe the education is good, but they associate with boys beneath their own rank of life, which seems to me a disadvantage; however, their mother cannot afford anything better. It is nice to see the boys with her, just what ought to be, such confidence between them, and such exact attention to her wishes. I fear that Mary and Algy and I were never on such terms with ours. But then her ladyship was so severe, we poor little wretches should have been afraid to try any 'confidences,' with her! But I have not yet told you about Cecil the youngest, who is a musical genius. He sings at the English Martyrs—you know the church—you and I used to go there when we were staying in Beaufort Gardens last season."

The consequence of this epistle was soon apparent.

"My dear," said Mrs. Evelyn of Mountmore to her husband, about three days afterwards, "we ought really to try and do something for poor Jack's boys; there is a rumour that they are sent to a school of the very lowest description; indeed," she added, becoming excited, as she observed Mr. Evelyn's placid countenance unruffled by the intelligence, "they habitually associate with the sons of grocers and cabmen for all I know! and this is your heir, William, brought up in this scandalous manner! Your poor brother! could he have seen his sons,—the consequence of his rash marriage"—her husband here hastily interposed in time to check the flow of words that he knew were only beginning to pour forth on this his wife's favourite theme of complaint. He promised that he would do his best to remove the heir of Mountmore from so contaminating an atmosphere.

Meanwhile the boy was wholly unconscious that he was his uncle's heir. His mother purposely concealed it from him; she thought that dreams of independence in the future would only unsettle him in the present, in which he would be obliged to work for his living. But she often talked of it to cousin Di, as they sat together when the children had gone to bed.

One morning came a stiff little note from Squire Evelyn. He proposed sending his eldest nephew to a public school. "Anything is better," he said, "than the present education he is receiving; he must be fitted for the high position he now occupies as my heir." The colour rushed to Mrs. Evelyn's face as she read; in her eyes her boy was more than all as his father's son! The contents of that letter were very bitter to her lonely heart. Yet for her boy's sake, and more because she felt her own Jack would have wished it, she mastered her feelings, and wrote back as cordially as she could, accepting her brother-in-law's offer.

"Now, Everard," she said when the letter had been duly despatched, "I have something to tell you," but she glanced as she spoke towards the other two, and cousin Di immediately proposed that they should go for a walk with her.

"That's good!" said Charlie, standing with hands thrust deep down into the pockets of his knickerbockers, "if there is anything up, Cecil and I will like to hear it, too!" but cousin Di's prompt and effectual measures put all delay out of the question, and Everard was left alone with his mother. Her heart was nearly breaking at the news she had to tell him. She knew that for them both, who had been all in all to each other,

ever since he could lisp out in baby tongue that he was "mother's comfort," this would be a terrible grief.

"What is it, mother?" he asked fearfully, looking up into her face. She placed his two arms about her neck as she had used to do when he was only a toddling thing, and told him what it was. Everard's first look was of grave surprise.

"Surely, mother, you will tell Uncle William I cannot go? surely you have not said yes to him?"

Then all his sorrow broke forth, and the passionate grief once aroused would not be controlled. His impetuous affectionate nature was shaken with the violence of his feelings when he found that she had actually written to accept his uncle's proposal. He could not listen to reason, and his mother, firm as she could be on other occasions, felt her own courage giving way.

"Everard, my dear, my darling boy, it would not be such a terrible separation," she strove to say; "you would pass your holidays with us, and after all, a public school is what all boys must go through; try and listen to me, my Everard."

It was of no use, and so an hour later, Miss Slingsby found them, as she expressed it, "howling in each other's arms."

"Agnes, this is weak of you," she said; "leave him now; yes, Everard, hear what I have to say; let your mother go," as he clung to her.

Everard was ashamed now of his tear-stained face, and turned away as he gulped down an irrepressible sob.

"Everard, you are twelve years old, and too old to act like this," said his cousin, trying to speak sharply, but feeling all the while the most intense sympathy for the sufferer; "it would be very wrong of your mother to throw away this kind offer of your uncle's—it is for your own advantage."

"For my advantage to leave mother? Oh, cousin Di, you don't think,—she has only me!" and the tears in spite of all his efforts burst forth again. But now cousin Di talked to him of the advantages to be gained even for mother, for certainly on Everard's education depended the assistance he would be able to give to his mother in after life. Conviction came at last, and with it a deep sigh that went to his god-mother's heart, and he told his mother that he was ready to do as she wished. A short time after this, Everard Evelyn was sent to Beaumont College.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## CHARLIE'S LARKS.

Still the wrong way will seem pleasant,  
Still the right way will seem hard,  
All our life we shall be tempted,  
We must ever be on guard.

*Mrs. Alexander.*

"Now, Charlie, you must be the head of the family; I shall look to you."

"All right," was the answer; "you shall see, mother!"

And for the next few days his clothes bore evidence to the strength of his resolution, not to get into any "rows at school." Only once his mother had to scold him, when he came home with the sleeve of his jacket torn quite off in what, he told her apologetically, was only "a slight scrimmage in the play-ground." Poor Charlie, the constant scrapes he got into were the burden of his life, but now that Everard no longer attended the College, "Evelyn minor" felt lonely without him, and his conduct was, for a time, most exemplary.

The lamp was lit in the little dining-room, Charlie and Cecil sat together at ate. Mrs.

Evelyn, muffled and cloaked, wished them good night, with many injunctions to Cecil to be in time for the choir practice, and to Charlie that they should both go early to bed. It was seldom she went out, but this was an evening party, and there were friends particularly invited to meet her, and she could not choose but go.

"How much longer are you young gentlemen going to sit over your tea?" asked Jessie, unceremoniously opening the door, as the carriage that had been sent to fetch Mrs. Evelyn rolled away.

"As long as we choose," answered Charlie; "you can't clear away yet, we haven't finished, so Miss Jessie, please take your departure."

"I have finished, Charlie," said Cecil, as Jessie wrathfully shut the door.

"Well, I have not," returned Charlie, "and Jessie is always tiresome as soon as mother's back is turned. I do believe here she is again, let us get some bread pills ready to shoot at her."

Cecil was quite ready to carry out the suggestion, but when Jessie appeared, she informed him that he must start for the choir practice, or he would be too late.

Charlie remained at the tea table until driven away by the long suffering Jessie, who forcibly

removed the cloth. He sat down to a pile of lesson books to be prepared for the next day, but at that moment an idea took possession of him, he could go and hear the practising. He went to get his hat, and Jessie's expostulations were of no avail.

"Now, Master Charlie, you'll do no such thing, you never go when your mamma's at home, stay quiet, do," but Master Charlie was off, and Jessie, descending to the lower regions, gave vent to her feelings to Larkins the cook.

"There's that scamp of a boy gone off his own way! Was there ever such a pickle as him?—no, never, I should say."

"Well, you know, we can't put old heads on young shoulders."

Just as he neared the school-house, an irresistible longing for mischief prompted him to creep in softly and hide himself behind some coats and hats hanging in the porch. He had hardly done so when there was a sound of feet, and some choir boys came running in. The practising was held in the school-room. The new-comers were late, the practising had already begun.

"Why, Charlie Evelyn, where have you dropped from?" cried one of them, as Charlie cautiously came out of his hiding-place; "did you bring your brother?"

"Hush, Walters, I want to have a lark,—and will you join?"

The boy to whom he spoke, a merry black-eyed lad, smiled his readiness for anything, and his eyes sparkled with mischief as Charlie detailed his plan.

"Come, Charlie," said another boy, "what do you want to do that for?—you'll get into a row."

"I want to pay off Simple Simon for saying that I made the fellows laugh, and so he wouldn't let me come in while the practice was going on the other evening."

The boys were hurrying in, and Charlie slipped into the school-room, creeping on all fours under the desks, took up his position behind a black-board on which figures were chalked, at the end of the room. Father Mordaunt came in, and the practising began. The hymn was "Faith of our Fathers." Cecil sang with all his heart, he was perfectly unconscious of his brother's presence, or that his mischievous eyes were peeping at him from behind the blackboard. He was thinking, as he sang, of his mother's words about that very hymn. "Saint Augustine brought the glorious light of the Faith to England, let us ask his prayers that it may shine throughout the length and

breadth of our dear country, once so highly favoured that it was called 'The Island of Saints.'" And Cecil's voice thrilled with the intensity of his heart's feelings, when suddenly, just as the second verse began, the gas-light by which they were standing grew dim, and then went out altogether, leaving the room in total darkness.

There was a sudden lull of voices, the harmonium groaned out a few wild notes—then ceased,—some of the boys laughed. The priest's voice was heard: "Who did that? who put the gas out?" Of course there was no answer, and then a tumult of voices began, everyone speaking at once, and asking who could have played such a trick? Only one boy knew who the author was, he held his tongue, and began to feel very uncomfortable as to the result of Charlie's exploit. The singers were convulsed with laughter. There was an end of the practising for that night, and the young priest, when the matches, had at last been found, dismissed them all with a severe reprimand for the impertinent trick played by one of their number. Who could it be?

Charlie Evelyn appeared at the door with the most innocent face, asking for his brother. Father Mordaunt looked at him suspiciously,

but made no comment. Cecil began eagerly relating what had occurred, and they were no sooner outside, than Charlie, who had scarcely been able to restrain his mirth, gave vent to his feelings in prolonged peals of laughter.

"Run away home," said his friend Walters, coming up to him, "or you may be caught after all."

But Charlie could not resist the delight of revealing himself to the other boys as the daring author of the trick, in spite of his little brother's deep distress, who listened with a shocked face to his account. He was soon the centre of an admiring knot of boys. The men of the choir had already taken their departure, so there was no fear of discovery. The boys—who were most of them poorly dressed—thought "the young gentleman" a very fine fellow indeed.

"It's lucky for you Father Mordaunt didn't see you do it!" said Walters.

"I shouldn't care!" was the audacious reply; "Father Mordaunt has nothing to do with me."

"He has something to do with you, as you will find," said a deep voice behind him, and he suddenly found himself held fast by a strong hand on his arm! Then indeed his heart beat fast, and poor Charlie would have given worlds to recall his last words, and to undo his foolish

trick of half-an-hour ago. Father Mordaunt had approached unperceived, and he was determined to make Charlie an example to the other boys. Then and there he boxed Charlie's ears before the whole choir, who had been looking at him with such admiration only a few minutes before. Charlie would not cry, though he was panting with mingled feelings of fear and shame, and his heart sank very low as Father Mordaunt without a word, marched him home, with little Cecil trotting tearfully by his side. He was thinking of mother,—what would she say?

Father Mordaunt stopped on the doorstep, and said: "I shall not come in now, but to-morrow I shall call, for I expect your apology, Charlie,"—he put his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder. "Ask the Child Jesus to help you to be a good example to those around you."

But I am afraid the last words had not the least effect upon Charlie; his little mind was so entirely absorbed by what would be said and done on the morrow.

Under the circumstances his prayers were even more hasty than usual, and he jumped into bed, his head full of what Father Mordaunt might say when next he saw him. Mrs. Evelyn had not yet come in.

The room was dark except for the light from

the gas-lamps outside, that shone in bright patches on the ceiling. Charlie could not sleep. He could hear by his regular breathing that Cecil was slumbering long ago. Mrs. Evelyn crept into the room, shading the light of her candle with her hand. Then Charlie turned over and pretended to be asleep. How differently Everard would have acted under similar circumstances! He could not have passed the night without first having confessed his fault, and sobbed out his repentance upon his mother's neck.

It was only next morning, just when he was starting for school, that he blurted out suddenly: "Mother, Father Mordaunt's coming this morning."

Cecil had been regarding him wistfully all breakfast-time, longing to tell "mother" all about it, but fearing Charlie's displeasure. A smile of intense relief lit up his mournful little face when he heard his brother's words,—he could not understand Charlie's reticence.

"Father Mordaunt?" repeated Mrs. Evelyn enquiringly.

"Yes. He is coming to receive my—what do you call it?—apology."

"Your apology! my dear boy; what *do* you mean?"



"Only that—that last night—" he hesitated then broke out : "Oh, mother, I'm very sorry, I am indeed ! but I went to the school to hear them practising, and then all at once it came into my head to have a lark ; and just for fun, you know, I put the gas out, and Father Mordaunt and all the choir were left in the dark right in the middle of a hymn !—and Simple Simon—Mr. Edwards, I mean—was tumbling about among his music books,—and nobody could find a match."

"My dear Charlie—" his mother could get no further.

"And then," chimed in Cecil, who was listening with an awe-struck face to this terrible recital, "Father Mordaunt boxed his ears."

"Boxed whose ears ?"

"Mine," said Charlie, hanging down his head. His mother spoke to him gravely, though I think she found it difficult to look as solemn as the occasion required.

After this event, Father Mordaunt and Charlie became fast friends, and even Mr. Edwards, the much-tried organist, had no complaint to make on those occasions when Charlie was allowed to blow the organ, and be "really useful."

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## CHAPTER VII.

## MOUNTMORE MANOR.

What was that mother's love ?  
The noblest, purest, tenderest flame,  
That kindles from above,  
Within a heart of earthly mould,  
As much of heaven as heart can hold,  
Nor through eternity grows cold ;  
*This* was that mother's love.

*Montgomery.*

SOME months passed away, and to Mrs. Evelyn's surprise, she received a letter from her brother-in-law, inviting her to spend Christmas at the Manor. Mrs. Evelyn did not hesitate to accept the invitation. She longed for her children to become acquainted with their father's old home, though for herself the sight must be one of trial and deep pain. Everard was to go straight from school to Mountmore, this was his uncle's plan, that his first day would be spent without her, but it could not be avoided. Of course the boys were enchanted at the prospect of a visit to the country. But Everard wrote that he did not care for anything so much as the thought of "seeing mother." The old Squire and his wife

were naturally curious to see "poor Jack's boys." They could only remember Everard as a chubby-cheeked baby, in frocks and pinafores, and the Squire was startled when a graceful boy jumped lightly down from the carriage, and a hand was held out to meet his own. The half-frank, half-shy manner attracted Mrs. Evelyn in spite of herself, and her husband felt his heart warm towards his only brother's child. The next morning, as he was taking his usual solitary walk towards the stables, the Squire was surprised by hearing quick steps behind him, and a voice exclaimed: "May I go with you? please let me, Uncle William," and Everard stood at his side, his cheeks rosy with his run through the fresh morning air.

"Come with me? Aye, that you may, you shall come through the park and see the view from Queen Anne's cedar, as we call it." The answer would not have been so cordial and hearty had his wife been within hearing, but they were alone, and the old man began to talk to the boy, every word recalling to him his young brother Jack, and the old days gone by.

Mountmore Manor was furnished in the sombre style of half a century ago, and Everard was glad to escape from its heavy gloom into the open air. How different the reality was from

what his fancy had pictured it, the Mountmore of his nursery days! They walked through the great rambling garden, with its thick tangle of shrubs and great shadowy cedars, into the open park. Then Everard could not restrain an exclamation of surprise and delight at the scene stretched out before him.

The brown fern lay half white with a slight sprinkling of hoar frost, and some great Scotch firs stretched their branches across the blue-grey sky, bronze and gold where the sun shone on their red trunks; the deer scampered across the broad expanse and disappeared over the brow of the hill, where Everard longed to follow. His companion looked at him with a smile that changed to deep melancholy, as he said: "You know that some day all this fine property will be yours, eh, boy?"

"No, I didn't know it!" was the puzzled answer; "who told you so, Uncle William?" The frank beautiful eyes were fixed with a questioning gaze upon his uncle's face. But the Squire made no answer, only he thought better of "poor Jack's wife" after that.

The next day Mrs. Evelyn arrived with Charlie and Cecil. It was Christmas Eve. There had been a heavy fall of snow, and the drive from the station, which usually took about half-an-hour to

accomplish, lasted double that time. Charlie and Cecil were both too much excited for their spirits to flag, but their mother found it difficult to be cheerful. She had not been to Mountmore since the death of the young husband she had so passionately loved during the short years of wedded life that to her at least had been so full of hope and sunshine. The first words that greeted her brought back a whole flood of memories, she had not been called so since long years.

"Mrs. John, how do you do, ma'am? we are so glad to see you." It was the old white-haired butler who first greeted her, and Henham always said "we," including himself in all that concerned his master and mistress after the fashion of old servants. He came forward to lift the children from the carriage, as though they were still babies as when they went away.

Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn received their guests with great formality in the stiff yellow drawing room. Everard ran into the hall with an eager cry, and threw his arms round his mother's neck. His was the real welcome, and for the first time that day, the tears that had been gathering in her eyes overflowed, and the drops fell on the boy's rosy upturned face. He pressed her hand, and marched in at the door by her side as though defying all the world to hurt her while he was

by! When the long late dinner was over, she pleaded a headache as an excuse for retiring early, and after a very chilling half-hour in the drawing-room, she and the three boys went upstairs. Under their aunt's severe frown they had been unusually quiet, but now their tongues were let loose.

"What a dreary old place!" exclaimed Everard, echoed by his brothers, while their mother prudently shut the door, and begged them not to speak quite so loud. Everard was anxious to tell her about his school-life, so they all sat round the fire, he with his head resting on her lap, and his bright eyes fixed upon her face. The others, sleepy, went off to bed, but they two sat together for a long time by the fire.

"Mother," he said abruptly, when a pause came in his own bright flow of talk, "will Mountmore be my own, some day?"

He had found it out then, at last. She gave a sigh, while she asked: "What made you think about it, Everard? Do you not know that your Uncle William must die first?" The crimson flush that mounted to his brow, and the distressed look in the eyes he raised to hers, showed her plainly that the thought was not his own.

"Good-night, my dearest boy!" How long

and fervently she kissed him, and held open her door, to watch him go softly down the passage to his room, with the anxious hope and fear for his future life which only mothers know.

Christmas morning came to the still old house. All were sleeping, but Agnes Evelyn knelt in prayer. She prayed for her dear ones,—for him who was no longer with them, and for his children. At home, she knew, midnight Mass would be offered, and she joined her prayers to the great Sacrifice, praying the Holy Child to preserve her boys from harm, and make them ever His own. The answer came, but for one of them it was not in the way she would have chosen.

“A merry Christmas! mother, a merry Christmas!” the three boys burst into her room some hours later. If the old place was dull, it certainly had no effect upon their boisterous spirits. They had been downstairs already, the house was decked with evergreens, they said, the oak pillars in the hall wreathed with garlands, and there were crowns of holly over the pictures and the armour on the walls.

A path had been swept through the park. They went to Mass. How familiar was every step of the way to young Mrs. Evelyn. The bells were ringing merrily, the sun shone out,

and Charlie and Cecil went running on in front, until called to order by a severe frown from their aunt. Everard seemed to feel instinctively what his mother was thinking, and kept close to her side, glancing wistfully into her face. In the village some of the cottagers came to their doors to drop a courtesy to "Mrs. John."

"Why doesn't Uncle William give some money to make the church pretty?" questioned his troublesome nephews that afternoon, as soon as they were alone with their aunt. Their mother was not in the room, or she would certainly have stopped the flow of questions.

"Aunt Caroline, why doesn't he have the church made bigger? the altar, too, is so poor and mean; why don't you buy some new things for the altar? why doesn't Uncle William make it all nice and beautiful?" This last came from Everard. His aunt coughed and fidgeted and did not immediately answer. Then she said: "Your uncle thinks the church in good order, and quite large enough for our own village people."

"Oh, but mother says," replied the persistent Everard, "that a church ought to be made as beautiful as it ever possibly can, because it is the place where God dwells."

And Mountmore church built by the first



Catholic Squire, might have been made very beautiful. In point of architecture it was perfect, a fit abode for the Lord of Life and Love. Why are men so slow to give Him what they do not grudge spent upon themselves? They will not break the precious box of alabaster; they murmur like the Jews of old, "To what purpose is this waste?"

Aunt Caroline was greatly relieved when the door opened and the children's mother came in. Her tormentors were despatched for a walk, with strict injunctions not to go upon the pond as the ice was not yet safe.

"Let Henham go with them," said the elder Mrs. Evelyn, "I will ring."

Before his mother could speak, "Please not, mother," pleaded Everard, "we would much rather go by ourselves; we know our way about, and we promise not to go on the pond."

"Very well. To-morrow you shall try the ice." She shut the front door after them, and returned with a smile into the library. Her sister-in-law's face expressed the reverse of smiles.

"Spoils them," she muttered, and added aloud, "It would have been better, my dear Agnes, if Henham had accompanied them as I wanted." This was said in the most frigid of tones.

"The boys will not disobey me," was the answer given very quietly.

"I don't believe it! they are evidently beyond your control, and far too accustomed to having their own way. As to obedience!—fiddlesticks—they don't know what it is!"

Agnes Evelyn's colour rose, and she bit her lip, but she remained silent. Her sister-in-law said no more, but when the old Squire came in some time after, she could not but own, though she did not acknowledge it, that she had been wrong in her conclusions.

"I wanted to take the boys on the pond," he said; "but that fine fellow Everard was firm in adhering to his mother's injunctions to wait till to-morrow."

Mrs. Evelyn made no answer, while Everard's mother could not conceal a bright smile of pride and pleasure at the intelligence.

The visit came to an end, all too soon for the children, who had made acquaintance with everyone about the place; Holt, the head keeper, and Martin the gardener, being the chief of these new friends, Henham was their faithful slave on every occasion. In the stables the old coachman let Charlie scramble up on the backs of the horses.

"Your father, sir," he told Everard, "was the

best rider in the county, and I do believe you'll have a seat as good, for your figure'll be much the same. Mr. John was a rare 'un to go. I mark me well the last time as ever he rode out o' them lodge gates, so delicate-looking, and I says to Mrs. Powney, he's not long for this world, and bless you, he never sat a 'orse again, that was the last time!"

The groom here interrupted to remark that "when Master Everard has 'orses of his own, he'll be the best rider in the county, and step into his poor father's shoes!"

Everard began to have some idea of his own importance, and his mother watched him anxiously, as mothers must watch their boys when they fear some approaching evil, and would fain, if it were in their power, avert the coming temptation. Next to our Guardian Angels, I think the love of a mother is most like our Heavenly Father's tender care.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## ALMS-GIVING.

What do they ask? those Eyes Divine,  
Thus fixed on sinful me;  
That I would keep this heart of mine  
From sinful faults e'er free.

*"Leaflets."*

EVERARD was away at Beaumont. Agnes Evelyn was standing in the window, administering a rebuke to Charlie. He was in disgrace at Albert College for hiding oranges, and handing them round at forbidden times, for the refreshment of his school-fellows. His mother tried to make him feel contrite for his misdemeanour, but she found it a difficult task, and Charlie's favourite reply, "all right, mother," failed to satisfy her.

"How could you think of doing such a thing?" she asked; "you might have been sure that you would be discovered and punished."

"Oh, no, not in a general way, mother," was the careless answer, "I've often done it."

She looked much shocked.

"I make a slit in the linings of my pockets, and the oranges roll down quite nicely,—the

knickerbockers look rather full about the knees, that's all!"

"Charlie, Charlie!" She said it so sadly, that he threw his arms about her neck, as Everard would have done, a rare exhibition of feeling on his part, and told her he was sorry to have grieved her, "but I don't care for those others," jerking his thumb in the direction of the College.

"That is not the way I want you to look at it," she said, "I want you to think about right and wrong, not about pleasing me or anyone else, except in so far as it pleases God."

Christmas was coming again, rain fell continuously, and the trees in the squares had lost all their smoke-dried leaves.

About this time, Charlie began to be very anxious to save up his money to buy a real good football, and as their uncle had made them each a present of five shillings, the boys determined to lay their money together for this purpose.

Cecil was very busy practising in the choir. During Advent they were to sing without organ.

"Will you tell me why sir? please," asked little Cecil of the organist, when the first practice was over.

Mr. Edwards had been getting himself into a great perspiration by his vigorous conducting,

and he wiped his forehead as he replied, "Can't tell you more than that it's custom,—no note of musical instruments during Advent, all vocal."

Cecil, who had a habit of puzzling out things in his own little brain, was not satisfied, and asked Father Mordaunt, whom he knew was ever ready to help him.

"Why is it?" he said, fixing his soft eyes upon the priest.

"Because Advent," answered Father Mordaunt, "is a season of penance, in preparation for Christmas. At Christmas, all is joy and highest praise,—*Gloria in Excelsis!*"

Cecil's serious little face lit up with a smile as he listened. "I long so to sing *Gloria in Excelsis*," he said simply and earnestly, and the priest laid his hand tenderly on the boy's fair hair, and prayed that the young heart might be always given to God as it was now. The child seemed so eager, so earnest in his endeavours to do something for God. He often went into the Poor School, and explained the meaning of sacred pictures to the toddling children as they came crowding round him, little ones who could scarcely lisp the Holy Name!

It was Sunday before Christmas. Charlie

came bounding up the house steps to meet his mother.

They expected Everard that week for the Christmas holidays, and Charlie's mind was full of football games. His own five shillings were in his waistcoat pocket, he always carried them about with him, and he fingered them now as he ran. A little girl stood at the door, sobbing bitterly.

"What are you crying for?" asked Charlie, the little gruff voice taking a very tender tone.

"My little brother's ill," explained the child between her sobs, "and mother can't get the wine for him, because mother's no money to pay. Father's been out o' work these six weeks last Saturday." She put her apron up to her eyes and the tears flowed fast.

"Is the fellow—your brother I mean—so very ill?"

The little thing stopped crying, and nodded.

Charlie stood irresolute. He put one hand into his pocket, then pulled it out again. His fingers clutched the cherished half-crowns, and the thought came, must I part with them? It was only for a moment, and then, with a sudden quick movement that made the little girl start, he thrust the two half-crowns into her hand, and without trusting himself to look, turned away.

He did not see the look of deep thankfulness that lit up her little careworn face, as, quite unprepared, she let the money drop jingling on the pavement.

"What! not going to buy the football after all!" It was Cecil who exclaimed in disappointed tones. "What will Everard say?" Here was a difficulty, and Charlie had recourse to his mother. She must explain to Everard, and when Mrs. Evelyn heard of the "poor little girl whose brother was ill," she remembered a conversation she had had with the boys, some days before. She had little known then the effect her words had upon one of them, and that one, heedless, careless Charlie!

Her eldest boy came back from school, as gentle and loving as ever, obedient to her smallest wish, but he began to demur at her share in little household duties, and to exclaim when he saw her busy about any of these, "Mother, can't Jessie do it? you ought not, only servants do those things!"

"Jessie is too busy," she would answer quietly, "she can hardly get through all her work as it is, and if I don't mend your jacket, Everard, it won't get mended at all." Another day, when his mother had been sighing over a heavy bill, and Everard was at her side, he said he wonder-



ed she should be "so stingy" when some day they would all be rich people. Then she turned upon him, and her eyes of sorrowful indignation made the boy ashamed. "Everard,—have you forgotten that your Uncle William must die before that can be? you would not wish it!"

Everard hung down his head, and never alluded to the subject again.

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## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ACCIDENT.

And if to-day my tide of life  
Shall ebb away,  
Give me Thy Sacraments divine,  
Sweet Lord, to-day.

In Purgatory's cleansing fires  
Brief be my stay ;  
O bid me, if to-day I die,  
Go home to-day !

"MAY we stay for the decorations?"

"If Father Mordaunt will not think you in the way." It was time for the Christmas decorations, and there was to be a beautiful Crib, and great wreaths of evergreens.

"Shall you come, mother?" asked Cecil.

"No, she must not go out with her cold so bad," said Everard, who now and then interposed with a kind of parental authority, which amused his mother not a little. "Mother, you must not. Your cold is too bad, and you have coughed all day."

"Well, Everard, you must tell Sister Teresa how sorry I am to take no part in the decorations."

"Is that the very holy one, with the calm, calm face?" asked Everard.

"They are all holy, I think," observed Cecil, and they *do* look happy!"

"Because they are doing God's Will, and that gives happiness, doesn't it, Charlie?" She spoke low, so that only he could hear as he sat at her feet on the hearthrug. He was playing knucklebones, but he looked up, and whispered, "I say, mother," and then rose to his feet and stood beside her. It was not often that Charlie deigned to make anyone his confidante.

"What is it?" she asked, as he put his mouth to her ear, but no sound came.

"You fellows are listening!" he exclaimed, "and it's a secret for mother!" He paused with his arm round her neck, while Everard moved away to the window, and Cecil began to sing softly to himself to show how perfectly unconcerned he was.

Some minutes went by while mother and Charlie seemed to hold a very serious conversation, at the end of which Charlie suddenly broke out with "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road!" and ran on all fours across the room to make an attack upon Everard's legs swinging from the window seat. There was an end of the brief quiet. Everard jumped down, and the two boys

pursued each other round the table, Cecil joining in the chase. Jessie would have exclaimed and threatened at the noise which ensued. Mrs. Evelyn merely moved a few things out of the way that seemed in danger, and then took up a book as quietly as if nothing was going on. It was only when the sofa cushions began to fly about in dangerous proximity to her favourite little bits of china, that she suggested an adjournment to the hall, and the noise increased tenfold outside.

Long afterwards she remembered that afternoon and the three bright young faces. It was the last game the three little brothers were to play together, but she did not know it then! When tired out at last with their own noisy romps, they came back to her; it was to beg for a story. The firelight flickered on the upturned faces in the twilight, and she told them a story just as she used to do when they were only little children.

"Cecil means to be a priest," said Everard, when the story was finished, "Saint Francis of Sales was very brave, and when he was only a boy he wanted to be a priest, didn't he? just like Ciss does!"

Charlie was silent, meditating on his conversation with his mother. Long afterwards, Mrs.

Evelyn remembered it, and Charlie's earnest resolutions to serve God, and the remembrance comforted her.

"Tell us about Saint Francis, tell us another story, mother," begged Cecil.

"I would rather it should be about sailors," interrupted Charlie.

"Charlie has wanted to be a sailor ever since Arthur Belman went off to the Britannia; he was at the College, you know, mother," explained Everard.

But all further stories were brought to a stop, by the entrance of Jessie, announcing tea. When it was over, the boys set off to church.

"Have you got your scarves?" called their mother from the top of the stairs. "Cecil, do not go without your great coat. Everard, dear, see he wraps himself up warm to come out again;" she ran down to put it on herself and button it up round his throat.

"Good-bye, mother."

She watched them cross the hall together, and heard the front door bang as they ran down the steps.

Benediction was over, the people filed slowly out. Father Mordaunt came down the aisle to Everard and Charlie. "Would they help him

carry some laths out of the sacristy?" The door kept creaking and swinging. People were coming in with baskets of wire and moss, young girls hastening to do their part in the Christmas decorations. With these came the gently-moving Sisters of Charity, like grey ghosts, with soft voices, flitting here and there, overshadowed by their large white caps.

"Mother cannot come," Everard was saying; "she has sent the great wreath for the east window, we all made it together, it is—I don't know how many yards long!"

"We will put that up last," said Sister Teresa, and she went to direct the men where to place their tall ladder in readiness, within the Sanctuary.

"Never mind about fixing it now, Jim," said one man to another, and they all moved away to the other side of the church. Charlie was left standing by the ladder, his head thrown back, as he strained his eyes to see in the dim light where the wreath was to go above the window arch. He looked at the ladder, and the thought came into his mind that he would climb up, and feel like a real sailor, on a real ship's mast! How high it went, right above the stone carving, and the two angels' heads. How much he would like to have a look at the angels, quite

close; he saw them every Sunday from his mother's seat, and how grand to have seen them *near*, and how surprised Everard and Cecil would be, to behold him in such an elevated position! . Where was Cecil ?

The choir-boys were grouped round the organ practising for the morrow. A low whispering hum went on in the church, broken now and then by the tapping of a hammer, or quick steps passing up and down. Charlie's foot is on the ladder, will no one see and stop him, in his rash attempt? It is not safe, it is not steady—it must come down! He mounts quickly and lightly, all unheeding that it trembles and sways, his bright boyish face is flushed with triumph and delight, as he looks up smiling to the angel wings so near him now—(ah, so very near!)—they seem to beckon him on,—up, up higher, higher. "*Gloria in excelsis, gloria!*" sing the choir at their practising.

For one instant the boy's slight graceful figure stands out against the white stone work behind him, as he reaches the top of the ladder and waves one hand triumphantly,—the next there is a long shrill scream breaking across the roll of the organ, and the chorus of Glorias, making every heart stand still with fear. They see him now, but it is too late, the ladder swings

round on the slippery pavement, and falls with a crash, there is a sound of a dull thud upon the pavement, and then all is still.

“There has been an accident—the ladder slipped—Charlie is hurt, I am afraid, very much hurt.”

The news came to the poor mother, sitting all unconscious of evil, at her fireside in the cosy little drawing-room. It took her only a few moments to run down the street and enter the church, the faithful Jessie following to wrap a shawl round her. “This cold, chill evening, and she with only her bonnet on!”

Years afterwards Agnes Evelyn remembered the scene distinctly that then presented itself to her eyes, every face and form and shadow in that sad picture. The half-lighted church, the little group of people speaking in awe-struck whispers, her boy lying unconscious in the midst, and strangely intermingling the sweet scent of the hot-house flowers. There, where he fell, they had placed a cushion beneath him, the life was ebbing swiftly and surely away, and they dared not move him. Sister Teresa held him in her arms. She thought he was dead, but as Mrs. Evelyn approached, he gave a low gasping sigh, and his eyes opened to fix themselves



on his mother's face. A crimson pool of blood made a dark stain on Sister Teresa's white linen, where the boy's head was pressed. Who can tell the speechless agony of those moments? The mother knelt down beside her dying boy. His lips moved, and she bent forward to catch the faint whisper, "Mother, I went up the ladder,—I am very sorry," and he closed his eyes.

When he opened them again for the second time, she had covered her face with her hands. Father Mordaunt touched her gently. "Speak to him," he said, "he can hear you now,—be calm for his sake."

Those words roused her.

"Charlie," she whispered, "do not think about the climbing,—it does not matter,—it was God's will,—Jesus—think of Jesus,—oh, Charlie!—you will see Him soon."

"Jesus," murmured the child faintly.

At a sign from Father Mordaunt, his mother rose from her knees and stood aside, and the priest came and stooped over the dying boy.

"Are you sorry for every sin that you have ever committed against our dear Lord?" he said very gently.

The child could no longer speak, but his eyes gave back the answer. As his lips moved, the

priest raised his hand over the curly head, all stained with blood, and gave the words of absolution. Then his mother took the poor shattered form in her arms, clasped the little hands over the image of Jesus crucified. Only the prayers for a departing soul broke the silence, and before the altar and the Unseen Presence, Charlie passed away to see the King "in His Beauty:" the Good Shepherd had called home His little lamb.

"The Child Jesus," his mother whispered. "Charlie, darling, don't fear,—the dear Holy Child holds out His arms to you!" and then, like a little tired child, he closed his eyes and breathed out his last sigh on her breast. They hardly knew exactly when he passed away. Everard had flung himself sobbing on the pavement, and was half asleep when they roused him to come home. Cecil was kneeling with his hands joined, his eyes fixed on Charlie's face, but with a look that had more in it of awe than grief. He did not realize yet that his brother was dead. He prayed the Lord to make him well, and surely the Child Jesus would hear him he thought. Yes, little Cecil, in His own best way He heard you, and made your brother well. It was all so sudden and so strange, but it was over, and they must go home.

## CHAPTER X.

## EVERARD AND CECIL.

Thou hast already begun to be among the innocent! Unto thee how sure is thy present life, thee how joyous the Church thy Mother receiveth on thy return from this world. Hushed be this bosom's groans, dried be these weeping eyes!

*(Epitaph on a Child from the Catacombs at Rome.)*

EVERARD, with a strange unwonted sensation of pain and aching at his poor little heart, stood looking out in the fading twilight of a bright frosty day. Bars of light, red and soft, streamed through the window from the setting sun, through the blind that was carefully drawn down, and the little corner where Everard was peeping. The window looked out upon the back yard, so there was nothing to be seen but a few broken bits of china, and a wooden bench against the wall, where some smoke-dried ivy grew. He did not know why he stood there, he felt the dull oppression of grief, and knew not how to shake it off. Presently, hearing a distant organ strike up a lively tune, he began to whistle. The merry ringing notes caught Jessie's ear, and she came hurrying in to silence him, and express

her surprise at his unfeeling conduct, "with your own poor brother only dead and buried yesterday!" She looked unutterable things, and shut the door again, leaving him standing there by the window as she had found him. He did not look out now, but, slipping down on to the floor, covered his face with his hands, and burst into an uncontrollable fit of tears. The moment's forgetfulness was succeeded by such a sharp pang of pain, that he could only sob out: "Charlie, Charlie, shall I never see you again? Charlie, speak to me, don't leave me all alone without you!"

A little hand touched his, and a soft cheek was pressed to his face. "Everard, don't you know *I'm* here, you've got me for a brother, Evvie dear." It was Cecil who crept on to the floor beside him, and nestled up close. "I know I'm not so strong or so old as Charlie, and it can't ever be quite the same, but you'll take care of me, won't you?—and oh, Everard, we will love each other twice over to make up for him."

Everard's choking sobs had subsided, and he drew the sleeve of his jacket across his eyes; he never liked to be seen crying. And now it was his turn to comfort Cecil, for the tears were rolling down his face, though he did his best to check them. Everard threw his arm around

him, and the little brother was comforted. There was a sense of safety and protection in the schoolboy jacket against which his head was pressed.

"I will take care of you, always, Ciss, and you shall be my chum," said Everard.

"Thank you, Evvie," said little Cecil very gratefully. Then they were both silent.

Upstairs there were noiseless footsteps and hushed voices. The dusk came creeping on. Cecil, worn out, at last fell asleep with his head on Everard's shoulder. Cousin Di's voice woke him.

"What, all in the dark! who's there? We had quite forgotten you! Jessie, bring candles." The decisive tone brought tea and lights.

"Not so bad after all, she is certainly less feverish; you shall both go and wish mother good-night, presently."

Would they ever forget the glow of those cheering words to their desolate hearts after the gloom of the long hours past, or the face of dear cousin Di who spoke them? During the sad weeks that followed Charlie's death, when their mother was too ill to speak to them, a word or a look from cousin Di, as she passed in and out, was like a ray of sunshine. Mother had taken them herself into that room, where

something lay so white and still with folded hands. She had knelt with them by Charlie's little coffin when they laid two white wreaths upon it, and she had placed the flowers on the head and in the still clasped hands.

It was only after all was over, and the funeral past, that her strength gave way, and Agnes Evelyn became so ill. It was hard to say who missed her most, Everard or Cecil. Left to themselves they would wander out with dejected faces, or sit on the stairs near her door, to ask cousin Di fifty times over how she was, and when they might see her? Jessie ruled downstairs, and her rule was a constant cause of dissension, for Everard would assert his own authority, and to Cecil was allotted the task of peacemaker, a difficult one when neither party would give in!

Father Mordaunt came in one day, in the midst of a battle, in which Jessie was finally sent away discomfited. Everard appealed to "Father Mordaunt." Jessie, whose ideas of proper decorum were exceedingly strict and sometimes far-fetched, had insisted on keeping down all the blinds of the house long after the funeral was over, which the boys bore patiently for a while, but the constant "dim light" was not to be endured, and Everard pulled them up, greatly to her indignation.

"Well, for how long would you like us to be in the dark? Mother wouldn't have it, I know," he exclaimed.

"For five days at least," answered Jessie indignantly, "and let the people know what a sorrow we have all gone through!"

At this juncture Father Mordaunt appeared and set matters right.

It was with feelings of relief as well as pleasure, that the boys hailed their mother's return to her accustomed place. It was three weeks after the terrible night of the accident that Agnes Evelyn made her appearance downstairs.

For the sake of her boys, she struggled to be her usual self, and smile brightly at Everard as he arranged the cushions for her in his tender way.

"I am afraid it is dull for you, my boys," she said, lingering lovingly on the last word; "you ought to be out, it seems so bright and sunshiny to-day."

"We have been out," said Cecil, "all the morning. Father Mordaunt took us, and we went with him yesterday too, and he's going to give a supper to the choir, and we are all to go down to Richmond for the day."

He stopped abruptly as he saw his brother's eyes fixed warningly upon him. The subject of

the choir had never been mentioned since the accident, and cousin Di had told the boys to be careful not to waken painful memories, for their mother was still very weak.

"So fond of him, Father Mordaunt was, Everard," she said, and Everard, following cousin Di's injunctions, hastened to change the subject.

"No, dear, no," she interposed, "it does me good to speak of him. It was only at first,—just at first,—that I could not,—could not bring myself to think of him as—" She stopped and did not finish the sentence.

Each boy took one of the white fragile hands in his, and kissed it as though by a common impulse. This was too much for the poor mother, and she burst into tears. Everard, frightened, was about to hasten away and call Jessie.

"Everard dear, do not go," she said smiling, through her tears, "I am very happy, I have my two darlings, and the third with God. I like to fancy that Charlie has seen father, now!" Then holding in her own the two brown hands that had clasped hers, she said very earnestly: "How happy it is for Charlie, he is safe from sin and death. Never forget that if we would some day see our Lord with father and Charlie,



we must live such lives as shall be a preparation for that joyful day."

The boys never forgot her words, they remained to be a beacon to them both through life, and a guiding star to the home above.

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## CHAPTER XI.

## THE YOUNG SQUIRE.

What e'er befalls his brethren twain, his bliss can never cease,  
Their lot may here be grief and fear, but his is certain peace.  
It may be that the tempter's wiles, their souls from bliss may sever ;  
But if our own poor faith fail not, he must be ours for ever.  
When we groan beneath this load of sin, and feel this grief and pain,  
Oh ! we'd rather lose our other two, than have him here again.

*Moultrie.*

MOUNTMORE MANOR looked grey and ghostly in winter, but its grimness was half done away in summer, when the park was all aglow with tall waving fern, and the great green boughs of beech and oak trees, a wealth of luxuriant foliage. This warm July day, most of the windows were closed and barred to the bright sunshine, and a general air of loneliness pervaded the old place. Outside, clear boys' voices came ringing up from the deserted gardens, and seemed to defy anything like melancholy.

Two boys in deep mourning emerged from the shadow of a great cedar, carrying a chair between them. Two years had not done much to alter Everard and Cecil Evelyn. The heir of Mountmore was taller, and Cecil had been advanced

to school-boy jacket and trousers, like his brother. Last year the old Squire died, and this was the first summer the boys and their mother spent together in the new-old home. What recollections crowded upon Agnes Evelyn! She could scarcely restrain her tears when she saw Everard, running and playing in his father's old haunts, and saw the Manor house, what once it had been, the bright merry home of her early love and happiness.

The boys went running now towards the house. Cousin Di was expected, and they were going to meet and welcome her.

When Miss Slingsby arrived at Mountmore Station, half-an-hour later, she was greeted on the platform by an old grey-haired porter, who informed her that a carriage from the Manor was waiting for her, and he added : " the young Squire himself has come to fetch you, ma'am ! "

Cousin Di smiled to herself; it seemed so strange to hear little Everard spoken of as a person of importance. She was soon driving rapidly along, to the merry chatter of her two small cousins, and the smart trot of a little chestnut pony, which, Everard informed her proudly, was all his own. In London the hot July sun had shone upon the streets with a dusty glare, but here, the soft breeze crossed hay-

scented fields, and waved the cool green fern into ripples, where the fallow deer lay lazily whisking away the flies, with their little white tails.

The jangling of the great door bell recalled Miss Slingsby to the present. Her thoughts had been all in the past, her last visit to Mountmore, and old Mrs. Evelyn's chilling reception of her guests. How different now! Everard and Cecil made the hall echo with cries of "Cousin Di! Mother,—here's cousin Di!" Their noisy feet tramped down the long galleries. The old house was changed. The solemn silence of the great empty drawing-rooms had been invaded, and in that dreariest of rooms, once old Mrs. Evelyn's boudoir, curly heads were placed, where the stiffest antimacassars used to lie without a wrinkle!

Our last peep at Everard and Cecil has come. I have little more to tell, but we must not leave them quite yet.

The school-boy Squire is about to lay the stone of the new transept at Mountmore,—the old parish church. The Bishop is to perform the ceremony. The ivy-covered pile looks strangely alive with flaunting banners and garlands. The churchyard is crowded with an eager expectant

throng. Our old friend Jessie, very smart for the occasion, stands foremost among the on-lookers, and Henham is there, proud and pleased, in ample white waistcoat and gold chain! There is a murmur of voices round the swaying poles and flag-staffs, then a deep silence. The procession is approaching, and as the priests and acolytes come winding through the crowd, their voices rise upon the air, and Cecil Evelyn is amongst them leading the hymn in a clear sweet treble. By his mother's side stands Everard. He is grave and very erect, his merry eyes awed and stilled. His hat is off, and the breeze blows back the hair from his high white forehead. The Bishop takes the silver trowel in his hand, and the stone of Everard's new transept is laid!

There are tears in his mother's eyes, tears of joy and thankfulness. Oh, that this fair beginning may prove the forerunner of many acts of mercy to be performed in the bright future. May the young Squire be a good steward and dispense in God's service the gifts He has so lavishly bestowed upon him.

When at last the crowd has left the church, Everard's mother turns her steps towards the silent altar to pray. The sunlight of the glowing afternoon streams through a window where a mitred saint is painted, with a little child beside

him. It is the window in memory of Charlie Evelyn, and they have painted him kneeling at his patron's feet, his hands crossed upon his breast, and the Saint's hand uplifted in the act of blessing him. Those who have read the story of Saint Charles, his life of labour and love, will understand why the mother chose him for her boy's patron and protector. Saint Charles Borromeo has prayed for him, for is not Charlie safe now from trial and temptation for all eternity?

A legend is told of an Angel gathering up the tears of a poor woman who knelt weeping before God. And surely Angels stoop to catch the whisper of the mother's prayer, and bear it to the Throne of Him Who was once a little Child Himself, upon His Mother's knee at Nazareth?

THE END.




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**GAYLORD**

